

MAY 2010  
\$4.99

**A WIFE'S PITCH!**

Opening Day Like You've Never  
Experienced It Before

# Chop **walk**

THE OFFICIAL MONTHLY MAGAZINE  
OF THE ATLANTA BRAVES

#6 **THE FINAL  
SEASON**

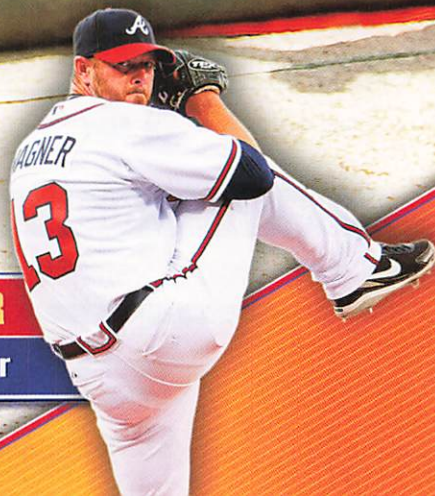
Back Where It All Began

# GRAND ENTRANCE!

An Inside Account Of **Jason Heyward's** Stirring Debut

**ELECTRIC CLOSER**

Q&A With Billy Wagner



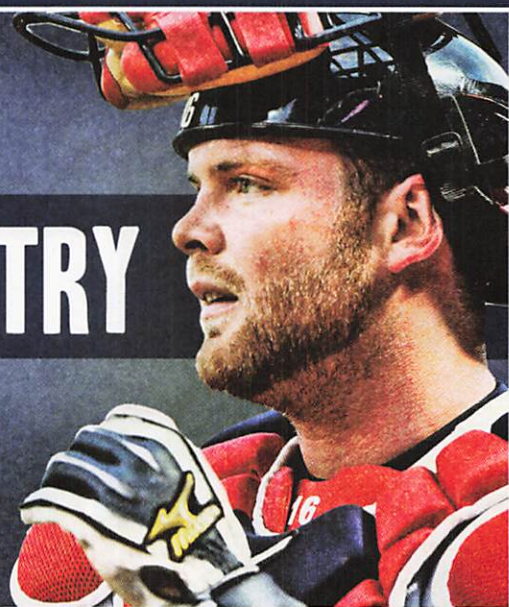




"Being a fan means having my back all season long."

# THIS IS BRAVES COUNTRY

BRIAN MCCANN, #16



## 2010 SINGLE GAME TICKETS ON SALE NOW

### APRIL

| S                         | M                        | T                        | W                        | T                        | F                        | S                       |
|---------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|
|                           |                          |                          |                          |                          | CWS<br>EXH 7:00          | CWS<br>EXH 1:00         |
| 4                         | 5<br>CHI<br>4:00         | 6                        | 7<br>PTV<br>CHI<br>7:00  | 8<br>PTV<br>CHI<br>7:00  | 9<br>FSS<br>SF<br>4:30   | 10<br>SS<br>SF<br>10:00 |
| 11<br>FSS<br>SF<br>4:00   | 12<br>SS<br>SD<br>6:30   | 13                       | 14<br>SS<br>SD<br>10:00  | 15<br>SS<br>SD<br>6:30   | 16<br>PTV<br>COL<br>7:30 | 17<br>SS<br>COL<br>7:00 |
| 18<br>FSS<br>COL<br>1:30  | 19                       | 20<br>PTV<br>PHI<br>7:00 | 21<br>PTV<br>PHI<br>7:00 | 22<br>PTV<br>PHI<br>7:00 | 23<br>SS<br>NYM<br>7:00  | 24<br>SS<br>NYM<br>1:00 |
| 25<br>ESPN<br>NYM<br>8:00 | 26<br>PTV<br>STL<br>8:00 | 27<br>PTV<br>STL<br>8:00 | 28<br>PTV<br>STL<br>8:00 | 29<br>SS<br>STL<br>1:30  | 30<br>SS<br>HOU<br>7:30  |                         |

### MAY

| S                        | M                        | T                        | W                        | T                       | F                        | S                       |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|
|                          |                          |                          |                          |                         |                          | HOU<br>3:00             |
| 2<br>FSS<br>HOU<br>1:30  | 3                        | 4<br>SS<br>WAS<br>7:00   | 5<br>SS<br>WAS<br>7:00   | 6<br>SS<br>WAS<br>7:00  | 7<br>SS<br>PHI<br>7:00   | 8<br>FOX<br>PHI<br>3:00 |
| 9<br>FSS<br>PHI<br>1:30  | 10<br>SS<br>MIL<br>8:00  | 11<br>SS<br>MIL<br>8:00  | 12<br>SS<br>MIL<br>1:00  | 13                      | 14<br>PTV<br>ARI<br>7:30 | 15<br>SS<br>ARI<br>7:00 |
| 16<br>FSS<br>ARI<br>1:30 | 17<br>PTV<br>NYM<br>7:00 | 18<br>PTV<br>NYM<br>7:00 | 19<br>PTV<br>CIN<br>7:00 | 20<br>SS<br>CIN<br>1:00 | 21<br>SS<br>PIT<br>7:00  | 22<br>SS<br>PIT<br>7:00 |
| 23<br>FSS<br>PIT<br>1:30 | 24                       | 25<br>SS<br>FLA<br>7:00  | 26<br>SS<br>FLA<br>7:00  | 27<br>SS<br>FLA<br>7:00 | 28<br>PTV<br>PIT<br>7:30 | 29<br>SS<br>PIT<br>7:00 |
| 30<br>FSS<br>PIT<br>1:30 | 31<br>SS<br>PHI<br>1:00  |                          |                          |                         |                          |                         |

### JUNE

| S                        | M                        | T                        | W                        | T                       | F                        | S                       |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|
|                          |                          | 1<br>PTV<br>PHI<br>7:00  | 2<br>SS<br>PHI<br>1:00   | 3<br>SS<br>LAD<br>10:00 | 4<br>SS<br>LAD<br>10:00  | 5<br>SS<br>LAD<br>10:00 |
| 6<br>FSS<br>LAD<br>4:00  | 7<br>SS<br>ARI<br>9:30   | 8<br>SS<br>ARI<br>9:30   | 9<br>SS<br>ARI<br>9:30   | 10<br>SS<br>ARI<br>3:30 | 11<br>SS<br>MIN<br>8:00  | 12<br>SS<br>MIN<br>7:00 |
| 13<br>FSS<br>MIN<br>2:00 | 14                       | 15<br>PTV<br>TB<br>7:00  | 16<br>PTV<br>TB<br>7:00  | 17<br>PTV<br>TB<br>7:00 | 18<br>PTV<br>KC<br>7:30  | 19<br>SS<br>KC<br>7:00  |
| 20<br>FSS<br>KC<br>1:30  | 21                       | 22<br>PTV<br>CWS<br>8:00 | 23<br>PTV<br>CWS<br>8:00 | 24<br>SS<br>CWS<br>2:00 | 25<br>PTV<br>DET<br>7:30 | 26<br>SS<br>DET<br>4:00 |
| 27<br>FSS<br>DET<br>1:30 | 28<br>PTV<br>WAS<br>7:00 | 29<br>PTV<br>WAS<br>7:00 | 30<br>SS<br>WAS<br>7:00  |                         |                          |                         |

### JULY

| S                        | M                       | T                       | W                              | T                        | F                        | S                        |
|--------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
|                          |                         |                         |                                |                          | 1<br>PTV<br>FLA<br>7:30  | 2<br>FOX<br>FLA<br>4:00  |
| 4<br>FSS<br>FLA<br>5:00  | 5<br>PTV<br>PHI<br>7:00 | 6<br>PTV<br>PHI<br>7:00 | 7<br>PTV<br>PHI<br>7:00        | 8                        | 9<br>SS<br>NYM<br>7:00   | 10<br>FOX<br>NYM<br>4:00 |
| 11<br>FSS<br>NYM<br>1:00 | 12                      | 13                      | 14<br>ALL-STAR GAME<br>ANAHEIM | 15<br>PTV<br>MIL<br>7:00 | 16<br>PTV<br>MIL<br>7:30 | 17<br>SS<br>MIL<br>7:00  |
| 18<br>FSS<br>MIL<br>1:30 | 19                      | 20<br>PTV<br>SD<br>7:00 | 21<br>PTV<br>SD<br>7:00        | 22<br>SS<br>SD<br>1:00   | 23<br>SS<br>FLA<br>7:00  | 24<br>SS<br>FLA<br>7:00  |
| 25<br>FSS<br>FLA<br>1:00 | 26                      | 27<br>SS<br>WAS<br>7:00 | 28<br>SS<br>WAS<br>7:00        | 29<br>SS<br>WAS<br>12:30 | 30<br>SS<br>CIN<br>7:00  | 31<br>SS<br>CIN<br>7:00  |

HOME GAMES AWAY GAMES Schedule as of February 2010. All times Eastern and subject to change.

### AUGUST

| S                        | M                        | T                        | W                       | T                       | F                        | S                        |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1<br>FSS<br>CIN<br>1:00  | 2<br>ESPN<br>NYM<br>7:00 | 3<br>PTV<br>NYM<br>7:00  | 4<br>PTV<br>NYM<br>7:00 | 5<br>PTV<br>SF<br>7:00  | 6<br>PTV<br>SF<br>7:30   | 7<br>FOX<br>SF<br>4:00   |
| 8<br>FSS<br>SF<br>1:30   | 9<br>SS<br>HOU<br>8:00   | 10<br>SS<br>HOU<br>8:00  | 11<br>SS<br>HOU<br>2:00 | 12                      | 13<br>PTV<br>LAD<br>7:30 | 14<br>PTV<br>LAD<br>7:00 |
| 15<br>FSS<br>LAD<br>1:30 | 16<br>SS<br>LAD<br>7:00  | 17<br>SS<br>WAS<br>7:00  | 18<br>SS<br>WAS<br>7:00 | 19<br>SS<br>WAS<br>1:00 | 20<br>SS<br>CHI<br>2:00  | 21<br>PTV<br>CHI<br>4:00 |
| 22<br>FSS<br>CHI<br>2:00 | 23<br>SS<br>COL<br>8:30  | 24<br>SS<br>COL<br>8:30  | 25<br>SS<br>COL<br>3:00 | 26                      | 27<br>SS<br>FLA<br>7:30  | 28<br>FOX<br>FLA<br>4:00 |
| 29<br>FSS<br>FLA<br>1:30 | 30<br>PTV<br>NYM<br>7:00 | 31<br>PTV<br>NYM<br>7:00 |                         |                         |                          |                          |

### SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER

| S                        | M                       | T                       | W                        | T                       | F                        | S                        |
|--------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
|                          |                         |                         | 1<br>PTV<br>NYM<br>7:00  | 2<br>PTV<br>NYM<br>7:00 | 3<br>SS<br>FLA<br>7:00   | 4<br>SS<br>FLA<br>7:00   |
| 5<br>FSS<br>FLA<br>1:00  | 6<br>SS<br>PIT<br>1:30  | 7<br>SS<br>PIT<br>7:00  | 8<br>SS<br>PIT<br>7:00   | 9<br>PTV<br>STL<br>7:00 | 10<br>PTV<br>STL<br>7:30 | 11<br>FOX<br>STL<br>4:00 |
| 12<br>FSS<br>STL<br>1:30 | 13<br>SS<br>WAS<br>7:00 | 14<br>SS<br>WAS<br>7:00 | 15<br>SS<br>WAS<br>12:00 | 16                      | 17<br>SS<br>NYM<br>7:00  | 18<br>FOX<br>NYM<br>4:00 |
| 19<br>FSS<br>NYM<br>1:00 | 20<br>SS<br>PHI<br>7:00 | 21<br>SS<br>PHI<br>7:00 | 22<br>SS<br>PHI<br>7:00  | 23                      | 24<br>SS<br>WAS<br>7:00  | 25<br>SS<br>WAS<br>1:00  |
| 26<br>FSS<br>WAS<br>1:30 | 27<br>SS<br>FLA<br>7:00 | 28<br>SS<br>FLA<br>7:00 | 29<br>SS<br>FLA<br>4:30  | 30                      | 1<br>SS<br>PHI<br>7:30   | 2<br>SS<br>PHI<br>7:00   |
| 3<br>FSS<br>PHI<br>1:30  |                         |                         |                          |                         |                          |                          |

ALL GAMES ARE BROADCAST ON: **680 ROCKWOLFS** ATLANTA'S ROCK STATION WATCH THE GAMES ON: **SPORTSOUTH FS SOUTHS FOX ESPN**

[braves.com/tickets](http://braves.com/tickets) 1.800.745.3000

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# BATTING ORDER

MAY 2010

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20-21

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PHOTO: DANAT/ATLANTA BRAVES



SPECIAL



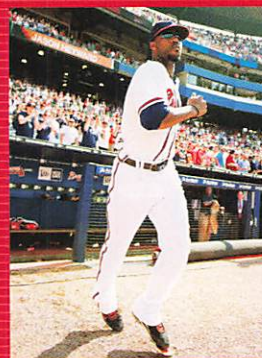
PHOTOS: DAVE MARTIN/GETTY IMAGES

### COVER CREDITS

JASON HEYWARD  
by Pouya Dianat/  
Atlanta Braves

Billy Wagner: Pouya Dianat/  
Atlanta Braves

Design by Clark Odom





# BATTING ORDER

MAY 2010

## SINGLES HITTERS

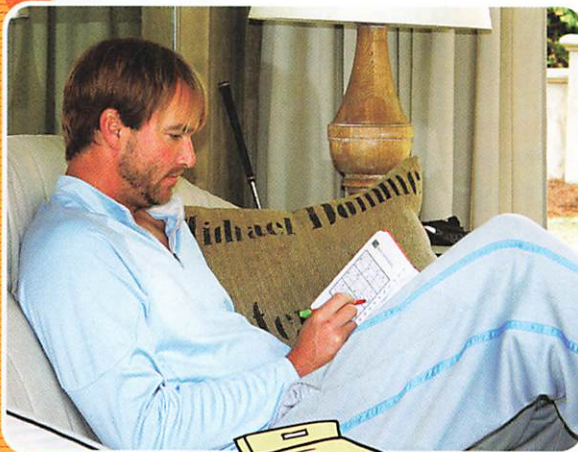
|       |                                                                                                                      |
|-------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
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CAROLYN LOWE

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VOLUME 6, NUMBER 5

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"The green grass. The blue skies. A dominating rotation."

# THIS IS BRAVES COUNTRY

TOMMY HANSON, #48

## 2010 FLEX PLANS

PICK ANY 10 GAMES FOR AS LOW AS \$110

- Save up to \$6 off every ticket
- Exchange tickets up to 24 hours before games
- Secure priority seating for all the hardest hitting dates including Opening Day vs. the Chicago Cubs, exciting interleague matchups, and games against National League East rivals the Mets and Phillies
- Two-for-One Wednesdays in the Outfield Pavilion
- Interest-Free Financing available through G.E. Money
- \$10 Discounted Parking in the lot of your choice
- Enjoy Friday Night Fireworks
- Choose different seats and vantage points throughout Turner Field
- No Blackout Dates
- Support Bobby Cox in his last season managing the Braves

## SEAT PRICING

| SEATING SECTION        | GATE PRICE          | FLEX PRICE |
|------------------------|---------------------|------------|
|                        | Non-Premium/Premium |            |
| Golden Moon Casino     | \$44/\$48           | \$42       |
| Field Level            | \$38/\$42           | \$37       |
| Terrace Level          | \$36/\$40           | \$35       |
| Field/Terrace Pavilion | \$24/\$28           | \$22       |
| Upper Box              | \$12/\$16           | \$11       |

\*\*Premium Games are Opening Day, all Fridays and Saturdays\*\*

404.577.9100

[braves.com/tickets](http://braves.com/tickets)

### APRIL

| S  | M    | T    | W     | T    | F        | S        |
|----|------|------|-------|------|----------|----------|
|    |      |      |       |      | CWS      | CWS      |
|    |      |      |       |      | EXH 7:00 | EXH 1:00 |
| 4  | 5    | 6    | 7     | 8    | 9        | 10       |
|    | CHI  |      | CHI   | CHI  | SF       | SF       |
|    | 4:00 |      | 7:00  | 7:00 | 4:30     | 10:00    |
| 11 | 12   | 13   | 14    | 15   | 16       | 17       |
|    | SF   | SD   | SD    | SD   | COL      | COL      |
|    | 4:00 | 6:30 | 10:00 | 6:30 | 7:30     | 7:00     |
| 18 | 19   | 20   | 21    | 22   | 23       | 24       |
|    | COL  |      | PHI   | PHI  | PHI      | NYM      |
|    | 4:00 |      | 7:00  | 7:00 | 7:00     | 1:00     |
| 25 | 26   | 27   | 28    | 29   | 30       |          |
|    | NYM  | STL  | STL   | STL  | HOU      |          |
|    | 8:00 | 8:00 | 8:00  | 8:00 | 1:30     | 7:30     |

### MAY

| S  | M    | T    | W    | T    | F    | S    |
|----|------|------|------|------|------|------|
|    |      |      |      |      |      | HOU  |
|    |      |      |      |      |      | 3:00 |
| 2  | 3    | 4    | 5    | 6    | 7    | 8    |
|    | HOU  |      | WAS  | WAS  | PHI  | PHI  |
|    | 1:30 |      | 7:00 | 7:00 | 7:00 | 3:00 |
| 9  | 10   | 11   | 12   | 13   | 14   | 15   |
|    | PHI  | MIL  | MIL  | MIL  | ARI  | ARI  |
|    | 1:30 | 8:00 | 8:00 | 1:00 | 7:30 | 7:00 |
| 16 | 17   | 18   | 19   | 20   | 21   | 22   |
|    | ARI  | NYM  | NYM  | CIN  | CIN  | PIT  |
|    | 1:30 | 7:00 | 7:00 | 7:00 | 7:00 | 7:00 |
| 23 | 24   | 25   | 26   | 27   | 28   | 29   |
|    | PIT  |      | FLA  | FLA  | PIT  | PIT  |
|    | 1:30 |      | 7:00 | 7:00 | 7:30 | 7:00 |
| 30 | 31   |      |      |      |      |      |
|    | PIT  | PHI  |      |      |      |      |
|    | 1:30 | 1:00 |      |      |      |      |

### JUNE

| S  | M    | T    | W    | T     | F     | S     |
|----|------|------|------|-------|-------|-------|
|    |      | PHI  | PHI  | LAD   | LAD   | LAD   |
|    |      | 7:00 | 3:00 | 10:00 | 10:00 | 10:00 |
| 6  | 7    | 8    | 9    | 10    | 11    | 12    |
|    | LAD  | ARI  | ARI  | ARI   | MIN   | MIN   |
|    | 4:00 | 9:30 | 9:30 | 3:30  | 8:00  | 7:00  |
| 13 | 14   | 15   | 16   | 17    | 18    | 19    |
|    | MIN  | TB   | TB   | TB    | KC    | KC    |
|    | 2:00 | 7:00 | 7:00 | 7:00  | 7:30  | 7:00  |
| 20 | 21   | 22   | 23   | 24    | 25    | 26    |
|    | KC   | CWS  | CWS  | CWS   | DET   | DET   |
|    | 1:30 | 8:00 | 8:00 | 2:00  | 7:30  | 4:00  |
| 27 | 28   | 29   | 30   |       |       |       |
|    | DET  | WAS  | WAS  | WAS   |       |       |
|    | 1:30 | 7:00 | 7:00 | 7:00  |       |       |

### JULY

| S  | M    | T             | W    | T     | F    | S    |
|----|------|---------------|------|-------|------|------|
|    |      |               |      |       | FLA  | FLA  |
|    |      |               |      |       | 7:30 | 4:00 |
| 4  | 5    | 6             | 7    | 8     | 9    | 10   |
|    | FLA  | PHI           | PHI  | PHI   | NYM  | NYM  |
|    | 5:00 | 7:00          | 7:00 | 7:00  | 7:00 | 4:00 |
| 11 | 12   | 13            | 14   | 15    | 16   | 17   |
|    | NYM  | ALL-STAR GAME | MIL  | MIL   | MIL  |      |
|    | 1:00 |               | 7:00 | 7:30  | 7:00 |      |
| 18 | 19   | 20            | 21   | 22    | 23   | 24   |
|    | MIL  | SD            | SD   | SD    | FLA  | FLA  |
|    | 1:30 | 7:00          | 7:00 | 1:00  | 7:00 | 7:00 |
| 25 | 26   | 27            | 28   | 29    | 30   | 31   |
|    | FLA  | WAS           | WAS  | WAS   | CIN  | CIN  |
|    | 1:00 | 7:00          | 7:00 | 12:30 | 7:00 | 7:00 |

### AUGUST

| S  | M    | T    | W    | T    | F    | S    |
|----|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| 1  | 2    | 3    | 4    | 5    | 6    | 7    |
|    | CIN  | NYM  | NYM  | NYM  | SF   | SF   |
|    | 1:00 | 7:00 | 7:00 | 7:00 | 7:00 | 4:00 |
| 8  | 9    | 10   | 11   | 12   | 13   | 14   |
|    | SF   | HOU  | HOU  | HOU  | LAD  | LAD  |
|    | 1:30 | 8:00 | 8:00 | 2:00 | 7:00 | 7:00 |
| 15 | 16   | 17   | 18   | 19   | 20   | 21   |
|    | LAD  | LAD  | WAS  | WAS  | CHI  | CHI  |
|    | 1:30 | 7:00 | 7:00 | 7:00 | 2:00 | 4:00 |
| 22 | 23   | 24   | 25   | 26   | 27   | 28   |
|    | CHI  | COL  | COL  | COL  | FLA  | FLA  |
|    | 2:00 | 8:30 | 8:30 | 1:00 | 7:30 | 4:00 |
| 29 | 30   | 31   |      |      |      |      |
|    | FLA  | NYM  | NYM  |      |      |      |
|    | 1:30 | 2:00 | 7:00 |      |      |      |

### SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER

| S  | M    | T    | W    | T     | F    | S    |
|----|------|------|------|-------|------|------|
|    |      |      | NYM  | NYM   | FLA  | FLA  |
|    |      |      | 7:00 | 7:00  | 7:30 | 7:00 |
| 9  | 10   | 11   | 12   | 13    | 14   | 15   |
|    | FLA  | PIT  | PIT  | PIT   | STL  | STL  |
|    | 1:00 | 1:30 | 7:00 | 7:00  | 7:00 | 7:00 |
| 16 | 17   | 18   | 19   | 20    | 21   | 22   |
|    | STL  | WAS  | WAS  | WAS   | NYM  | NYM  |
|    | 1:30 | 7:00 | 7:00 | 12:00 | 7:00 | 4:00 |
| 23 | 24   | 25   | 26   | 27    | 28   | 29   |
|    | NYM  | PHI  | PHI  | PHI   | WAS  | WAS  |
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| 30 | 31   |      |      |       |      |      |
|    | WAS  | FLA  | FLA  | FLA   | PHI  | PHI  |
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|    | PHI  |      |      |       |      |      |
|    | 1:30 |      |      |       |      |      |

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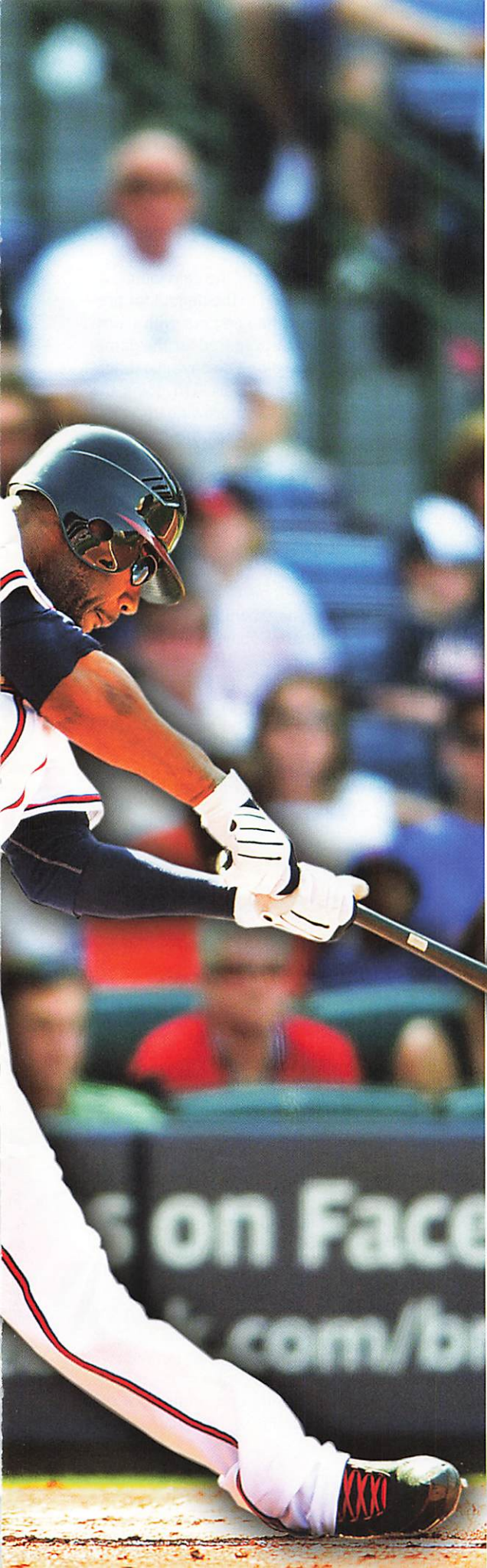


# GRAND ENTRANCE!

An Inside Account Of **Jason Heyward**'s Stirring Debut







BY PATTY RASMUSSEN

**E**ASILY THE MOST UNFORGETTABLE DAY in the life of 20-year-old rookie rightfielder Jason Heyward began in an almost forgettable way.

"I'm not really sure what time I woke up, maybe 9:30," said Heyward with a chuckle. "I know the alarm didn't wake me. I woke up on my own. I didn't think, 'Today's the day,' or anything like that. It was just, 'Time to get up and get going.'"

And "get going" he did, in a big way, about seven hours later in his very first major league at-bat. With two men on base in the bottom of the first inning and with a two-ball count, Heyward connected on his very first big league swing with a fastball, down and in, from Chicago Cubs pitcher Carlos Zambrano.

The Turner Field crowd - 53,081 strong - was in a frenzy as the ball soared over the field and into the Braves bullpen. As Braves radio broadcaster Jim Powell aptly described the scene, "This place is upside down!"

Heyward rounded the bases, accepted his back slaps, handshakes, and high-fives, and looked as cool and collected as he did hours before when he arrived at the ballpark, took batting practice, and prepared for the game ahead. It's still early, but Heyward is clearly a special rookie with baseball skills and poise that belie his age.

Here's an inside look at his first day in the major leagues - both behind the scenes and in front of the fans.

#### 10:40 A.M.

Heyward arrived at Turner Field, driving himself from the Atlanta apartment he shares with friend and Gwinnett Braves first baseman, Freddie Freeman. Heyward and Freeman met before they signed with the Braves, hit it off immediately, and have been roommates ever since.

Once at the ballpark, Heyward changed out of his street clothes and ate breakfast in the clubhouse - bacon, sausage, eggs and toast. Afterward, it was off to the training room to receive treatment for his left leg shin splints.

He warmed with a brisk walk on the treadmill, then went to the batting cages to hit off the tee for about 15 to 20 minutes, getting a

With this first swing of his big league career, Jason Heyward turned a 3-3 tie into a 6-3 lead by hitting a long home run to right field.

feel and a rhythm to his swing.

Reporters are allowed into the clubhouse three and a half hours before every game, but Heyward was nowhere to be found when they entered at 12:40 p.m. Eventually he wandered into the clubhouse at 12:54, wearing headphones, the universal sign that a player is not to be disturbed!

"I was listening to one of my playlists," he recalled. "I don't pick anything in particular. I just choose a list and start listening."

POLYA DANAY/ATLANTA BRAVES



### 1 P.M.

Heyward was one of the first players on the field for batting practice. A flock of photographers was waiting outside the dugout to snap the first picture of him emerging from the tunnel, but he slipped past them and up the steps before they noticed him. He jogged to the outfield and shook hands with a batboy waiting to shag flyballs.

### 1:35 P.M.

Heyward came in from the outfield, tossed the ball with bench coach Chino Cadahia for about five minutes in front of the dugout, and then moved to the batting cage to take his swings with the other players in Group 2. In between taking his swings, he talked to Chipper Jones. Jones pantomimed a swinging motion, while Heyward listened attentively.



ALLISON SHREFFTS



POPEA DANAY/ATLANTA BRAVES

### 3:40 P.M.

Opening Day pre-game introductions begin. Brian McCann was presented with his third Silver Slugger Award. The crowd went particularly wild when Bobby Cox was intro-

Heyward (clockwise from top, left) loosens up before the game, visits with Hank Aaron before catching his first pitch, and does an interview with ESPN's Orel Hershiser. Once the game was official, Heyward jerseys were in great demand.



JAMES FEEZE

### 1:55 P.M.

Finished with hitting, Heyward talked briefly with a member of the Braves media relations staff before heading back to the outfield to finish his batting practice duties.

### 2:10 P.M.

Heyward was "miked" for a pre-taped interview with ESPN's Orel Hershiser. The interview took four to five minutes, but Hershiser leaned in for a few words with the rookie before they broke up.

"He told me he appreciated the way I played the game," said Heyward. "He said it makes it fun for him to see guys like myself out there playing the game the right way. He told me to have fun."

### 2:15 P.M.

Back inside the clubhouse after batting practice, Heyward headed to the showers. As he walked to his locker, he was approached by a reporter but politely said he would talk after the game. He went back to the training room to get his left shin and arch of his foot taped for the game before dressing and going to the food room for a bite to eat.

"I think I had a ham-and-cheese sandwich," he said later.

Heyward spent the time before reporting to the dugout for pre-game introductions as he always does, hanging out with teammates in the clubhouse, getting mentally prepared for the game.

"It's the same routine I always keep. I didn't do anything different because it was my first major league start. I'm doing the same stuff I've been doing, professional ball or growing up, whatever. Come in, get into the routine, prepare for the game. My approach is: Be prepared for whatever the game brings to me."



STANLEY FACILITY

duced, and Heyward received an equally enthusiastic ovation from his hometown crowd.

Heyward left 64 tickets for friends and family, including his parents Eugene and Laura Heyward, his 14-year-old brother, Jacob, grandparents Nesbit and Jean Benjamin from New York City, and aunts from Beaufort, South Carolina.

Laura dissolved into tears, overcome with emotion, when she saw her son take the catcher's position behind home plate to receive the honorary first pitch from Braves legend, Hank Aaron.

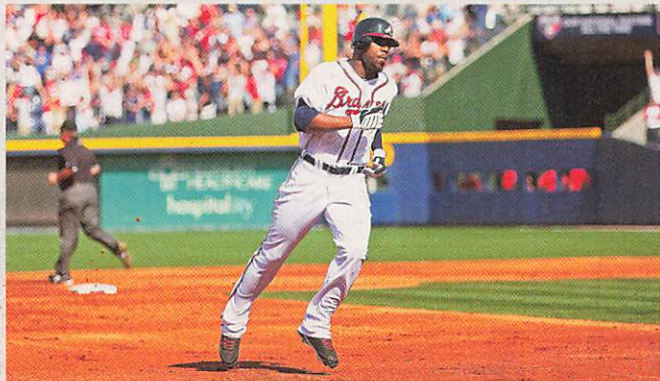
"We had no idea that was going to happen," she said.

When Heyward and Aaron shook hands and embraced, the Braves home run king offered this bit of advice, "Have fun. You're ready to do this."



**4:15 P.M.**

It didn't take long for the rookie to be tested. Cubs leadoff hitter Ryan Theriot backed Heyward up with a high flyball into bright sunlight. With his sunglasses down and his glove held high to provide additional shade, Heyward made his first major league putout. But a single by Kosuke Fukudome, a walk to Derrek Lee, and a home run by Marlon Byrd meant the Braves were down, 3-



Heyward (clockwise from top, left) demonstrates the home run trot he's sure to repeat many times, and accepts a congratulatory hug for his home run from Chipper Jones. Meanwhile in the stands, his mother, Laura, and brother, Jacob, embrace, while his father, Eugene (L), accepts congratulations from a nearby fan.



0, when they came to bat for the first time in 2010.

Cubs pitcher Carlos Zambrano left his "A game" in his suitcase, though. He walked lead-off hitter, Melky Cabrera, and gave up a single to Martin Prado. Chipper Jones followed with a single to left field, bringing Cabrera home and sending Prado to second. McCann advanced the runners with a single to right-center, before Troy Glaus made the first out when he struck out swinging. Yunel Escobar added to the hit parade, sending a shot up the middle to score Prado and Jones to tie the game.

The crowd was already fired up with the score, 3-3, when Heyward made his way to the plate. He said he didn't hear the rhythmic chants of "Hey-ward, Hey-ward" from the crowd. "When I was walking up to the plate, I was just thinking that I wanted to get a good pitch to hit and get the job done," he said. "No butterflies."

The rookie laid off the first two pitches, but saw what he was looking for on Zambrano's third pitch. He connected and began the first of what will likely become many home run trots around the bases.

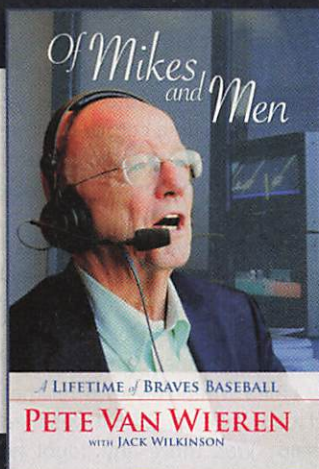
"I felt my legs, but I couldn't hear myself think," he said. "It was so loud it was like a roar, 'AAAAHHHHH.' That was cool."

Up in the stands, the Heyward family and friends rejoiced. The Braves family section of Turner Field was awash in a sea of hugs, high fives and happy tears.

As the game continued, Heyward continued to play his game. He lined out in his second at-bat in the third inning and struck out looking in the fifth, but contributed to a six-run seventh inning when he reached first on a throwing error by Derrick Lee, then scored on Eric Hinske's triple. In the bottom of the eighth

inning, in his fifth and final at-bat of the game, Heyward sent a line-drive single straight up the middle, collecting yet another RBI as Brooks Conrad scored from third.

Following the fifth inning, when it became an "official game,"



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the Braves Clubhouse Store began selling jerseys and t-shirts bearing Heyward's name and number, 22. A Major League Baseball Player's Association rule states that a club can't begin selling a player's apparel until after he's played in an official major league game. The store was swamped and sold more than 500 jerseys and shirts that night.

### 6:57 P.M.

Final score: Braves 16, Cubs 5. To no one's surprise, Heyward was named the player of the game by broadcasters. He went 2-for-5 with a home run, four RBIs and 2 runs scored. Not bad for his first day's work. After a brief on-field interview with Jerome Jurenovich from the Fox Sports Network, Heyward made his way back to the clubhouse. Television and print journalists filled the tunnel leading to the clubhouse, waiting for admittance.

### 7:05 P.M.

Heyward's teammates were already inside getting changed or watching other games on television. He acknowledged a couple of "good game" greetings from coaches as he made his way to his locker. After hanging up his cap, he was treated to a rousing roar of



cheers, heard through the thick cinderblock walls by the waiting media, as his team leaped to their feet and crowded around him.

"It was completely unexpected, and it was cool," said Heyward. "I appreciated it."

### 7:15

Surrounded by layers of reporters, Heyward patiently answered question after question, first by television and radio reporters, then by the local beat writers and some national baseball writers.

Out of nowhere, a tattooed arm with a plate full of shaving cream snaked its way through the wall of media, and Peter Moylan smashed a shaving cream pie in Heyward's face. The rookie took the attack in stride.

"The shaving cream pie means you did something cool in the game," he said. "Though whipped cream would probably taste better."

Asked what he planned to do with the home run ball, retrieved by bullpen coach Eddie Perez, Heyward deadpanned, "Probably sell it?" before breaking into his wide smile and saying, "No, I'll keep it with my family."

A reporter wondered if Heyward could have written a better script for the game. His answer: "Yeah, go 4-for-4 and everyone get a hit."

### 7:30 P.M.

As reporters melted away from the area surrounding Heyward, two long strips of white tape stuck to the floor around his locker became visible. The "boundaries" were the handiwork of reliever Kris Medlen who lockers next to Heyward.

"That didn't work, did it?" he asked.

Eddie Perez walked over to Heyward with another memento of the evening, the Opening Day lineup card signed by Cox.

### 8:10 P.M.

Most of the players and families were long gone by the time Heyward, dressed in jeans and a grey shirt, walked into the tunnel to leave Turner Field. He listened to music on his headphones and began checking messages on his cell phone.

Close to 100 fans remained on the sidewalk next to the player's parking lot, hoping to get a glimpse of their new Braves hero. He didn't sign autographs but waved in acknowledgment before climbing into his Chevy Tahoe and driving out the gate.

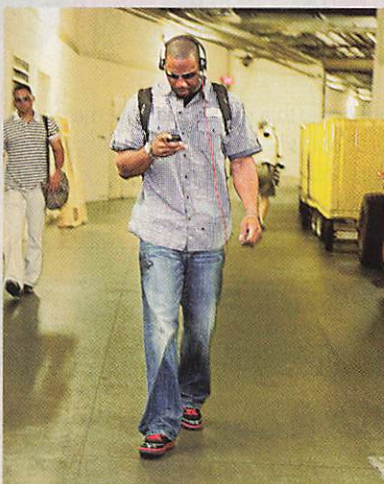
His friends, including Freeman who turned around in pre-game traffic and hurried back to their apartment to watch Heyward's home run on television rather than miss the at-bat, were waiting to join him for a celebratory post-game meal.

Heyward's family walked slowly back to their car, almost stunned by the roller coaster of emotions they'd experienced.

"It was all he'd ever wanted to do, to play baseball," said his grandmother, Jean Benjamin, simply.



Heyward does a post-game interview as the "star of the game" (above) and walks out of the ballpark checking his phone messages (below), while fans (L) wait for him outside the players' parking lot.



**HEYWARD GOT SOME** well-deserved rest the following day, an off day spent with his family in McDonough, a suburb southeast of Atlanta. His dad, who works at Warner Robins Air Force Base as an engineering consultant, decided to take the week off from work.

"My brain is mush!" Eugene said. "Jacob has spring break, and Laura took off work (as a quality consultant for Georgia Power) so it worked out. I don't need to be a hero."

On Wednesday, Heyward said he saw the replay of his home run a couple of times, but not since then, and he reflected on his first 24 hours as a major leaguer, all the hype and

accolades.

"It was cool, but I was most happy to see 16 runs next to the Braves on the scoreboard versus 5 for the Cubs," said Heyward.

On the same day Heyward made his debut, his manager was introduced on Opening Day for the last time. Cox said he experienced a little emotion as he exchanged lineup cards.

Asked whether he felt any chills when Heyward hit that dazzling home run, Cox summed it up, "Sure, a little. It was like (third base coach) Brian Snitker said, 'Was there any doubt he was going to do that?' He's a great kid. He'll have his struggles, probably, like any other 20-year-old in the big leagues, but he's a very talented kid."



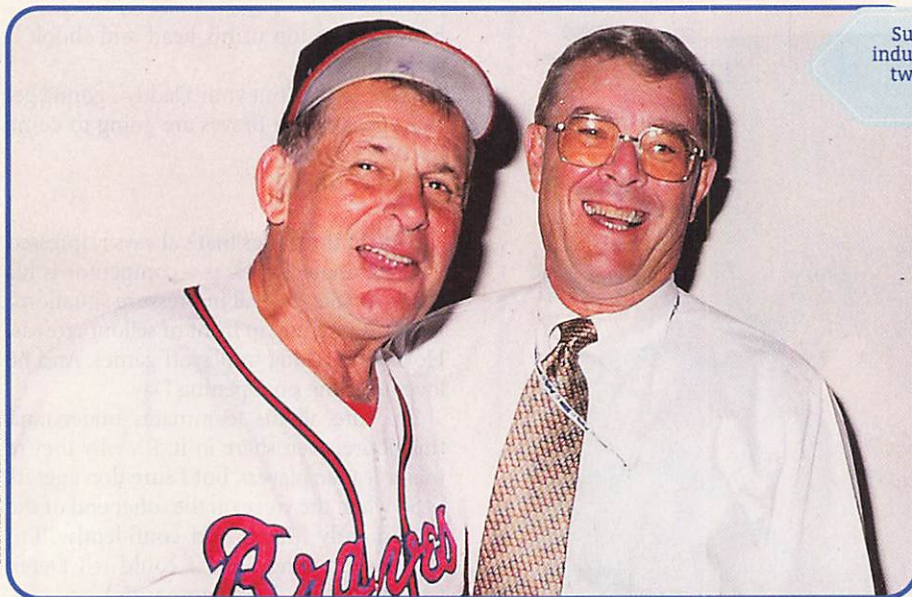
# PAINTING THE CORNERS

BY JAY BUSBEE



## THE RETURN OF A HALL OF FAMER

Super scout Paul Snyder (with Bobby Cox), who was inducted into the Braves Hall of Fame in 2005, ended his two-year retirement to hunt down prospects for the draft in June, the same month he turns 74.



COURTESY OF SNYDER FAMILY

**IF YOU LIVE ANYWHERE** south of the Mason-Dixon Line, there's a pretty good chance Paul Snyder has driven past your doorway at some point in the past 50 years.

Snyder, the legendary scout and a member of the Braves Hall of Fame (Class of 2005), has logged more hours, seen more prospects, and kick-started more pro careers than almost anyone in baseball. He's tracked down more small-town high schools and eaten more ballpark food than any man ever should consume.

But is Snyder complaining? Heck, no. He loves the scouting game so much, he's come out of retirement to drive a few more miles and eye a few more promising youngsters for the Braves. And for fans that have enjoyed the products of Atlanta's farm system, from Bob Horner to Brian McCann, that's very good news indeed.

"I retired two years ago (after the 2007 season), but I always told Tony [DeMazio, the Braves' director of scouting] to let me know if I could help," recalled Snyder, who turns 74 on June 11. "So, a few weeks ago, he called me and asked what kind of shape I was in. I said I was going to the gym six days a week. He said, 'Well, are you in good enough shape to see some ballgames?'"

The inquiry came at a perfect time.

"Over the winter, I'd been saying that I missed going to games," said Snyder's wife, Petie, his constant companion. "I'd hold the

radar gun, and he'd write. And I missed that."

So obviously, it didn't take a whole lot of prodding to get Snyder back in The Life. He signed with the Braves as a promising prospect himself back in 1957, then moved into the scouting office in the late '70s. He served a key front-line role as former Braves GM John Schuerholz assembled a baseball behemoth, scouting and signing household names like Tom Glavine, David Justice, Steve Avery and Ryan Klesko.

Listening to Snyder describe how he breaks down a player's talent is like listening to a down-home Yoda. For instance, Snyder doesn't even bother with the most obvious standard of performance - the boxscore.

"Stats can be misleading," he said. "I don't pay a whole lot of attention to them," which is a wise idea considering you've got guys who are possibly only a few weeks away from professional baseball playing against prom kings.

Instead of stats, Snyder has a whole range of more subjective categories to assess high schoolers - "thunder in the bat," for the big hitters, is my personal favorite - but above all, he's looking for guys who are "baseball players." That's not as redundant as it sounds. He's looking for "dirt guys," players that will show up, day in and day out, grinding it out to the best of their ability. And his prime example of a dirt guy is another familiar name.

"Every time I talk to a group of ballplayers, I point to Mark Lemke," he said. "Here's a player you wouldn't look twice at because of his skills, but he played on World Series teams because he was a dirt guy."

Snyder doesn't have to think hard to hit on the superlatives of his career.

"The best all-around athlete I ever scouted was Chipper [Jones]," he said, "but the best power hitter? Bob Horner. Whew, that kid could hit. I mean, everybody can hit when they're in high school, but you could tell there was something more going on with him."

Snyder hasn't had much of a chance to check out the new wave of Braves talent - "I don't know anything more than you do," he said, which is a serious understatement of his own observational abilities - but notes the new crop's promise.

"[Jason] Heyward, [Freddie] Freeman, these kids have something right upstairs, above the shoulders," he said. "You only have to tell them something one time and they get it. It's a tribute to them, a tribute to their parents and coaches. There aren't many kids you can say that about."

It's clear with every sentence he speaks that Snyder has a deep affection for the Braves organization. What is it that's kept him in the Braves' fold for all these years?

"Oh, that's a tough question," he said. "I signed with them in '57, and I was never asked to leave... It's such a special group, you know? We don't have any..." The term he used really can't be repeated in a family magazine, but use your imagination. "Nobody here wants the other guy's job. They want to earn what they get."

And anybody who thinks the road gets easier the higher up the ladder you climb needs to take a good look at Snyder's odometer. Radar gun and stopwatch in hand, he'll be in Auburn one day, Columbus the next, Atlanta the next, and back home to North Carolina the day after that.

So how long can he keep this up?

"We'll go to the draft [in June], and then we'll see," he said. "I'm not sure when I'm going to be done with this silly game."

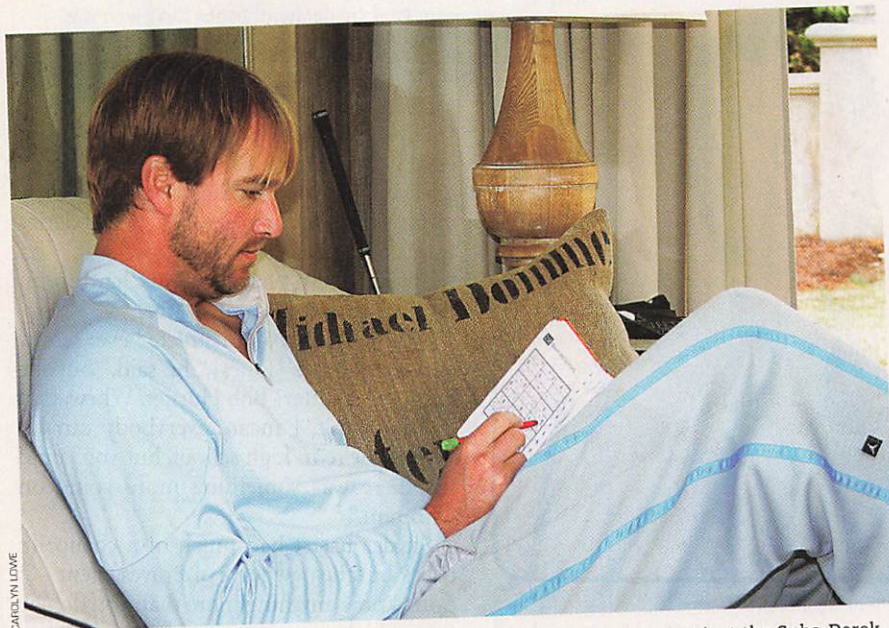


# A Wife's Pitch

BY CAROLYN LOWE



## THE ROLLER COASTER OF EMOTIONS



Before driving to Turner Field for his Opening Day starting assignment against the Cubs, Derek Lowe passed the time at home by calmly working several Sudoku puzzles.

**M**y fingers hadn't yet started to bleed... but they were close, as I continued to pick at the skin around my nails. My knees were bouncing up-and-down at a feverish pace as his dad yelled, "C'mon Derek!" In my head, all I could hear were my silent utterances, "Turn 2 outs into 3... turn 2 outs into 3. You've got this. I believe in you."

My eyes felt like they could burn a hole into the mound the way they were focused only on the Man-in-the-Middle of Turner Field. It was like the other 53,000-plus weren't even there.

"This is you... this is you. Make your pitch," I said to myself again.

Then I heard it! Crack! The sound that interrupted my thoughts was like the screech of nails on a chalkboard. I didn't see Marlon Byrd's bat connect with the ball, because my eyes were still focused solely on Derek. I turned my eyes skyward. I started to hope, but I knew it was gone.

As the crowd fell quiet, I felt a ripping, stinging sensation on the inside of my right thumb. But it was nothing compared to the pounding in my chest. No! Just like that, one pitch... three runs. I didn't have that in the playbook.

**I** can remember like yesterday when Derek called me on his way home from spring practice and said, "I'm starting Opening Day." Right then, butterflies started flying around in my stomach. I'd been nervous ever since!

I don't know why, really. I should be used to it by now. It's not like I haven't been through it before. This would be Derek's fourth Opening Day start since he and I have been a couple.

Derek says, "It's just one of 34 starts," but I know it's more than that. So does he. He just can't admit it until it's over.

**M**y head fell into my hands. The tears I wiped away moments earlier as Bobby Cox ran the lineup card out to home plate were welling up again, but these were different tears. I became vaguely aware of the sprinkling of boos being shouted from above. I looked and saw a slightly smeared vision of Cubs royal blue high-fives at home plate. The Man-in-the-Middle was looking down.

"Carolyn, are we losing?" Derek's six-year-old son, Tanner, asked as he tugged on my dress skirt.

Okay, time to collect myself. I put my

hand on the top of his head and shook it reassuringly.

"Yes," I said, "but your Daddy's gonna get this guy, and the Braves are going to come back."

Tanner smiled.

**O**ne of the things that's always impressed me about Derek as a competitor is his desire to take the ball in pressure situations. He loves pitching in front of sellout crowds. He loves pitching in playoff games. And he loves pitching on Opening Day.

I'm sure all his teammates understand this desire, even share in it. It's why they're major league players, but I sure don't get it!

So when the voice on the other end of the line in early March said confidently, "I'm starting Opening Day," I could tell Derek felt vindication. I felt nauseous!

I don't want to give the wrong impression. I was also so very proud and happy for Derek. It's just the announcement came as such a surprise to me. Let's face it, if you're a Braves fan (and you are because you're reading *ChopTalk!*), you know how Derek ended last season.

As his wife, it was hard to hear the harsh criticism. I see first-hand how hard he works and how disappointed he was in himself. I know how badly he wanted the winter to end so he could get back to business and erase the demons of last season. I just didn't expect the business to start on Opening Day.

**A**fter the last out in the top of the first, I tried to relax a bit. But as I sat back in my seat, I saw Carlos Zambrano take the mound.

"Argh," I thought ominously. "He's good."

I tensed up again as the three runs on the scoreboard now seemed insurmountable.

"Derek has matched up against him several times before," I told myself. "He's never lost. Have faith."

With my knees still shaking, the Braves came to the plate. Call it faith. Call it luck. Admit we're just flat-out good, because it started to happen.

Melky Cabrera leadoff walk. Martin Prado single. The drums started beating beyond the center-field wall. Arms held shoulder-height and foam tomahawks



began making their familiar chopping motion. Chanting began in unison. Then the-Brave-of-all-Braves put us on the board. How fitting Chipper Jones drives in the first run of 2010!

I embraced Derek's dad. I high-fived the guy in front of me. My voice, not yet in mid-season form, was already gone.

**W**e woke on Opening Day before the sun. I know that may sound a bit strange, but it's not for us. Derek never sleeps in on game day.

People ask me all the time, "Is Derek superstitious? Does he do the same things before every game?"

Except for the early-to-rise habit, I'd have to say, "No."

Derek admits he was a bit that way early in his career, but told me it was often disastrous. He says there's nothing worse than taking the field before a game feeling like you've already lost because you couldn't find a decent chicken parmesan the night before!

Traveling with him during the season as much as I do, I have come to realize how difficult it would be to keep the same routine, day-in and day-out, whether you're at

home or on the road.

Take Opening Day, for example: A unique challenge because the day before was Easter Sunday. That meant there was a 6-foot-6 bunny hiding Easter eggs at our house before the break of dawn. Try finding a way to repeat that drill all season!

**I**t's hard to describe the way Turner Field sounded to me as Yunel Escobar stepped into the batter's box with the bases loaded in the bottom of the first. It was more like a hum or a ringing than a roar. I swallowed hard to try and clear my ears, but it was like my head was in a bubble. Nerves can do funny things. Then with a big swing, the bubble burst! Escobar tied the game, 3-3. Or as I like to think, zero-zero.

I'd be lying if I said I remember whether or not I was jumping up-and-down with the rest of the crowd, but I know what I was thinking, "They've given Derek another chance."

**I** stared at Derek sitting in the pool-house through the glass doors in the living room. He was working on what had to be his fifth Sudoku puzzle of the morning.

"How many of those is he going to do," I wondered.

As many as it takes, I guess. I tried to read his mood as I looked-on from afar. Was he nervous like me? Anxious? Excited?

Nothing. While my mind was swirling, my stomach aching, he was so... calm. Later, he played catch with his son, Tanner, and daughter, Taylor, talked shop with his dad, Donnie, who had driven down from Michigan, and acted like it was a day like any other.

He honked as he backed out of the garage and threw us a casual smile and fist pump as he drove off. I crossed my fingers and prayed. The only things a wife can do.

**T**hen came the three-run homer... God Bless Jason Heyward!

Later... what I'm sure felt like an eternity to Chicago's Man-in-the-Middle... his manager came for the ball. The line: 8 earned runs, 1 1/3 innings. Zambrano was done.

The crowd went wild as he walked into the visiting dugout. Fans waved, "Goodbye," as the new pitcher ran in from the bullpen.

Despite my jubilation, I couldn't cheer. I knew his wife was watching somewhere.

**D**oes that mean one wife's misfortune is another's to celebrate? Perhaps that's melodramatic. I know someone has to win. For the record, I'm glad it was us!

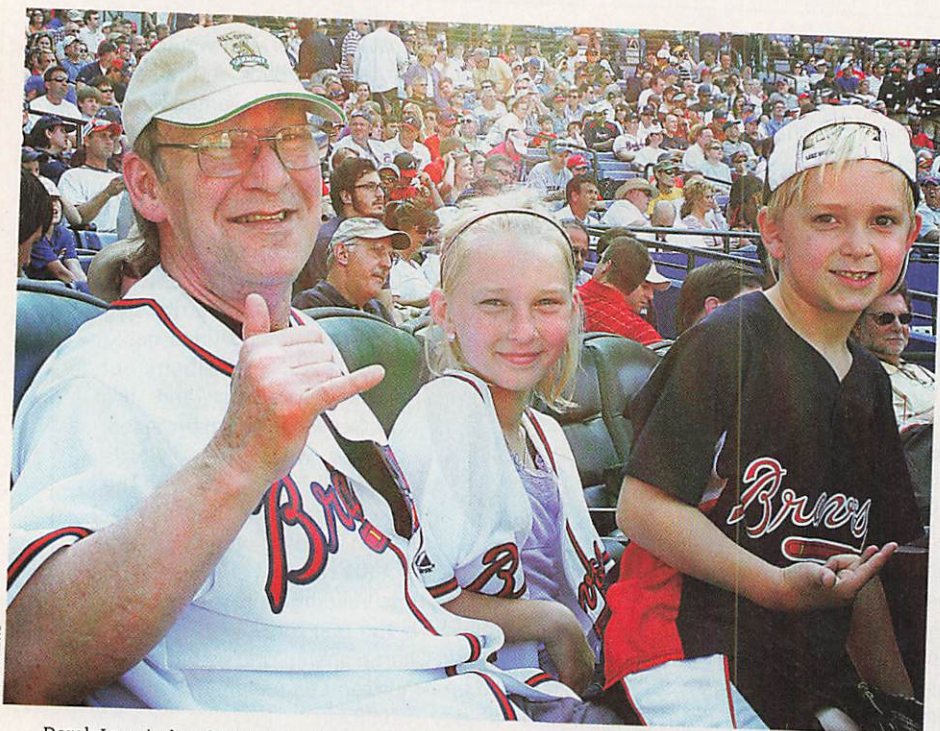
I'm happy it was a good old-fashioned thumping (16-5), too, because our house isn't usually such a jovial place after Derek gives up five earned runs. He wasn't thrilled with his performance. He would rather have started the way he did last season - with eight shutout innings (at Philadelphia). But in spite of the boxscore, Derek said the only pitch he really regretted was the first-inning pitch to Byrd. (I still think he should have carried Nate McLouth off the field on his shoulders!)

Derek wanted to pitch better. He will pitch better. But at the end of the day, you don't always have to be great. You just have to be better than the other guy.

And on this day, Derek and the Braves were.

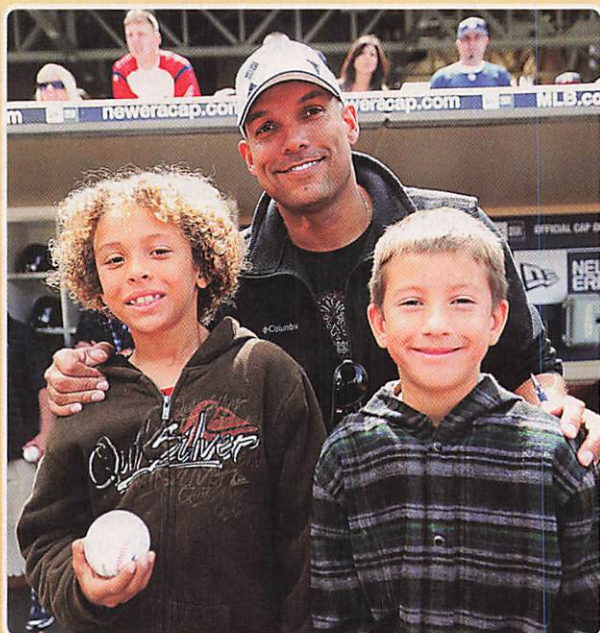
#### EDITOR'S NOTE

Carolyn Lowe, the wife of Derek Lowe, is contributing a monthly column to ChopTalk throughout the season.



Derek Lowe's daughter, Taylor, his son, Tanner, and his father, Donnie, were decked out in their Braves finery for Opening Day festivities at Turner Field.





CHRIS HANCOY/SAN DIEGO PADRES

Braves Hall of Famer David Justice with his son, DJ, (L), and cousin Ethan Villalobos, at Petco Park.

## FAMILIAR SMILE

**DAVID JUSTICE'S** smile is just as perfect as it was when he hit the home run that beat Cleveland, 1-0, in Game 6 to win the 1995 World Series, and the Braves Hall of Famer (Class of '07) was flashing it frequently when he greeted Bobby Cox's team at Petco Park April 12 for the Padres' home opener.

Justice, who lives in suburban San Diego, was on the field before the game, visiting with Cox, his coaches, the players and others, including San Diego Chargers quarterback Philip Rivers, who threw out the ceremonial first pitch. With him were his son, D.J., age 7, and D.J.'s cousin, Ethan Villalobos, who were collecting autographs on baseballs.

Asked what he's doing with his time, Justice, who was two days shy of his 44th birthday, said, "Coaching! Baseball, football and basketball. Coaching my kids."

Justice and his wife, Rebecca, have built a new home, after losing theirs in the San Diego wildfires of 2007. They have two sons and a daughter. David also shows up in quite a few celebrity golf events and is proud to point out he has his handicap down to eight.

## HEAVY HANDED

**ERIC HINSKE** and Melky Cabrera came home from the first road trip of the season a little heavier than when they left. That's due to the fact that they were hauling Yankees 2009 World Series rings that they picked up in San Diego, of all places.

Cabrera was the regular center-fielder for the Yankees last year, and Hinske, who was traded from Pittsburgh to New York on June 30, spent the second half as a utilityman and pinch-hitter for the eventual World Champions.

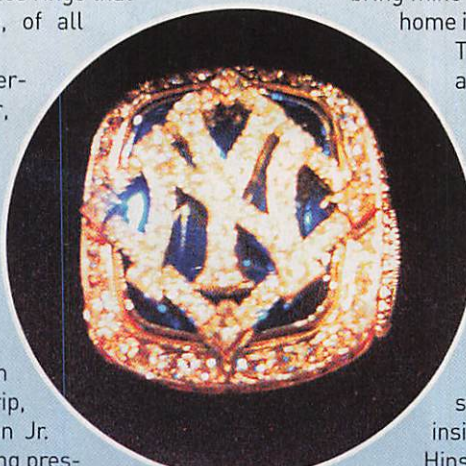
The Braves and Padres had an off day April 13, and while Hinske and Cabrera rested from the already testy West Coast trip, Padres utilityman Jerry Hairston Jr. flew to Yankee Stadium for the ring presentation ceremony. Hairston, who was with New York the last two months of '09, played deliveryman and brought back Hinske's and Cabrera's rings. "It's cool," Hinske said, admiring the ring April 14

in the visiting clubhouse at Petco Park. "It would have been tough for us to fly there and back on the same day, but Jerry texted me and asked if I wanted him to bring mine back. I said, 'Sure!' I'll keep it at home in a safe and wear it sometimes."

The rings are quite a sight. They are handcrafted with white gold and feature a Yankees blue stone accented by a diamond-clustered "NY" logo, rising from a diamond-lined baseball path. Renditions of Yankee Stadium and the Yankees logo adorn the sides, along with the words "Tradition" and "Unity." The Yankee Stadium inaugural season logo also is etched on the inside of the rings.

Hinske is building quite a collection.

He's played in the last three World Series, also getting a World Championship ring with the Red Sox in 2007 and an American League championship ring with Tampa Bay in 2008.



ERIC HINSKE





FOYU/DANIEL ATANTA BRAVES

## CHANGE OF PACE

**CHIPPER JONES** has a new look this year, and it doesn't have anything to do with bulking up in the weight room or making a change in his batting stance. Most serious Chipper fans no doubt have noticed that for the first time in quite a while, he's playing without chin whiskers or any facial hair, with the occasional exception of a day's growth.

"You know me, I flow back and forth," Chipper said with a sheepish grin when asked about shaving. "The big factor is (wife) Sharon. She's never particularly liked facial hair. But I figured as long as I was hitting, I'd keep it. Then I had a down year last season, so I decided to shave. I figured I might as well try something different."

Chipper said he's not sure when he shaved - perhaps the day after Opening Day. And he's not making any promises about how long he'll keep his new look.

HOW DO THEY DO THAT?

## KEEP OFFICIAL SCORE

**THERE MAY BE** over 40,000 people watching a Braves game at Turner Field, but only one keeps official score for Major League Baseball.

Mike Stamus, an official scorer for 12 seasons who works about 35 to 40 Braves games per year, arrives in the press box about 30 minutes before game time. He starts by filling in a scorebook, entering both lineups, as well as information on weather conditions.

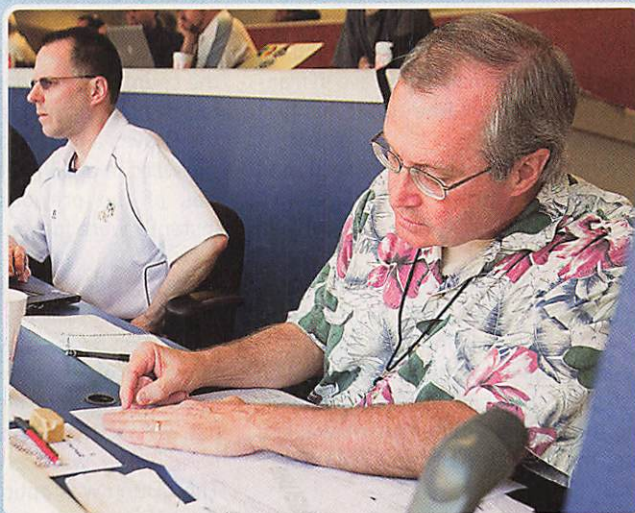
The official scorer closely watches the game, entering each play into the scorebook. Major League Baseball's official rules cover most scoring decisions, but other plays require tough judgment calls. On rare occasions, they impact achievements like no-hitters and batting titles.

"Ruling hits or errors is a judgment call a lot of times," said Stamus. "Wild pitches or passed balls, sometimes those choices are difficult to see from our vantage point, so we have to look at a replay on those a lot. Any hit, error, or judgment call that I need to make, I have access to television. Whoever is broadcasting the game will always replay the play a couple of times. So I can always look at a replay quickly to help me decide, if I can't make a decision from watching it live."

After the game ends, the official scorer makes sure that everything in the scorebook reconciles by examining the total plate appearances, putouts and other statistics. The scorebook's accuracy gets tested further versus Major League Baseball's in-game scoring system. This information comes from another individual entering pitch-by-pitch data from the Turner Field press box.

"I have to reconcile my totals with his at the end of a game before he can submit the boxscore to Major League Baseball," said Stamus. "There is a handwritten form that I have to fill out, and those numbers have to match what is in the boxscore, and what's in the report that Major League Baseball gets. The Braves PR people will fax that form that I fill out to the Elias Sports Bureau."

- STEVE FALL



SEYMOUR/ISTOCK

Jack Wilkinson, one of the official scorers at Turner Field, attends to business in the pressbox.



## HOT HITTER

**IT TOOK** a no-hitter by Colorado's **Ubaldo Jimenez** to finally cool off **Martin Prado** April 17. Prado hit safely in the first 10 games of the season, as well as the last four of 2009, giving him a career-best 14-game hitting streak. But Prado wasn't just getting a hit a game, he was getting them in bunches. He had 15 hits in the first eight games, breaking an Atlanta record of 14 set by Chipper Jones (1998) and tied by Marcus Giles (2004). Through the first 10 games, Prado had 19 hits, tying the Atlanta record set by Deion Sanders in 1992. Prior to the no-hitter, in which Prado drew two walks and went 0-for-2, he was batting .332 dating back to June 6, seventh among all major leaguers.

Martin Prado, who took over the regular job at second base late last June, has picked up where he left off and is among baseball's top hitters in that time.



PHOTO: DANIEL ALVAREZ/ATLANTA BRAVES

## HEYWARD'S HOMER

For the second straight year, the Braves experienced the rarity of having a player hit a home run in his first major league at-bat. Last year, it was **Jordan Schafer** in the season-opener at Philadelphia. And this year, it was **Jason Heyward**, who hit the first pitch he swung at, for a three-run homer against the Cubs at Turner Field April 5.

Heyward became the sixth Brave in franchise history to hit a home run in his first at-bat.

The other four besides Heyward and Schafer are: **Jermaine Dye** (1996), **Chuck Tanner** (1955), **Johnny Bates** (1906) and **Joe Harrington** (1895).

Heyward was the 103rd player in history to accomplish the feat and the first since **John Hester** of Arizona last Aug. 28. Twenty-four rookies actually homered on the first pitch they saw, including Tanner, who did it as a pinch-hitter for Milwaukee and later managed the Braves (1986-88).

## TO THE RESCUE

With the Braves trying to bounce back from **Ubaldo Jimenez**'s April 17 no-hitter and win a series against Colorado April 18,

Atlanta trailed, 3-2, and was down to the last out in the bottom of the ninth when **Jason Heyward** stepped to the plate with the bases loaded against Rockies closer **Franklin Morales**. A hard-throwing lefty, Morales is a tough challenge for any left-handed hitter, let alone one with only two weeks of major league experience. But with the count 2-2, Heyward drove a solid single to left field, driving in two runs and giving the Braves a 4-3 victory. The team mobbed Heyward in a wild celebration, and memories of the previous night's humiliation instantly were forgotten.

## PERSONNEL DEPARTMENT

The first roster moves of the season took place April 15 when **Jo-Jo Reyes** (right knee sprain) was placed on the disabled list, retroactive to April 13, and lefty reliever **Mike Dunn** was recalled from Gwinnett. Then Dunn was optioned back to Gwinnett April 17, and lefthander **Jonny Venters** was recalled from Gwinnett to take his place.

The Braves set their Opening Day roster April 3, two days before the season opener against the Cubs. The final moves included

infielder **Diory Hernandez** (left shoulder rehab) and outfielder **Jordan Schafer** (left wrist rehab) going on the 15-day disabled list, retroactive to Mar. 26.

In other moves, Venters and catcher **Clint Sammons** were optioned to Triple-A Gwinnett. Righthanders **Craig Kimbrel** and **Scott Proctor**, catcher **J.C. Boscan**, first baseman **Freddie Freeman**, infielders **Brandon Hicks** and **Joe Thurston** and outfielder **Matt Young** were reassigned to Gwinnett. The Braves purchased the contract of outfielder **Jason Heyward** and assigned him uniform No. 22.

## OPENING DAY ROSTER

**PITCHERS** (12): Jesse Chavez, Tommy Hanson, Tim Hudson, Jair Jurrjens, Kenshin Kawakami, Derek Lowe, Kris Medlen, Peter Moylan, Eric O'Flaherty, Jo-Jo Reyes, Takashi Saito, Billy Wagner.

**CATCHERS** (2): Brian McCann, David Ross.

**INFELDERS** (7): Brooks Conrad, Yunel Escobar, Troy Glaus, Eric Hinske,



Omar Infante, Chipper Jones, Martin Prado.

**OUTFIELDERS** (4): Melky Cabrera, Matt Diaz, Jason Heyward, Nate McLouth.

## SHORT HOPS

**A** When **Troy Glaus** hit a long, majestic home run at Petco Park April 14, it was his first home run since Sept. 28, 2008, with St. Louis. The American League home run champ in 2000 when he hit 47 for the Angels, Glaus played in only 14 games last season when he was recovering from shoulder surgery.

**A** The Braves were held hitless by Colorado's **Ubaldo Jimenez** April 17 in a 4-0 defeat at Turner Field. It was the 16th no-hitter pitched against the Braves in franchise history and the first since **Randy Johnson's** perfect game May 18, 2004. The closest thing to a hit was **Troy Glaus'** line drive to the left-center gap in the seventh inning that centerfielder **Dexter Fowler** caught with a dive. The Braves drew six walks in the first five innings, but Jimenez retired the final 15 men he faced for the first no-hitter in Rockies franchise history.

**A** **Chipper Jones'** home run April 16 was the 428th of his career, moving him into sole possession of 39th place on the all-time list. That left him three behind Hall of Famer **Cal Ripken Jr.** for 38th place.

**A** Through games of April 18, **Jason Heyward** led the Braves in home runs (3) and RBIs (15). He also ranked first in both categories among all major league rookies.

**A** **Yunel Escobar** had a career-high five RBIs on Opening Day against the Cubs with a two-run single and a bases-loaded double.

**A** **Brian McCann** hit a home run on Opening Day for the second straight year. He's one of seven major leaguers to accomplish the feat in 2009-10.

**A** **Chipper Jones** missed the San Francisco series April 9-11 with a strained right oblique. He had a cortisone shot and returned April 12 in San Diego.

FRANK  
WREN  
GENERAL MANAGER



## PITCHING WILL PUT US ON TRACK TO WIN A LOT

**OVERALL**, after the first nine games, I'm pretty happy with where we are. We let one slip away from us, but that's going to happen occasionally. We were in pretty good position in that game in San Francisco (4-2 lead in the ninth, only to lose, 5-4, in the 13th, April 9), but other than that, we've pitched and played pretty well.

The offense is continuing to get better, more consistent, which is encouraging because that's where we've been the spottiest so far. We knew that would get better, though, because we have a lineup full of guys with a track record for hitting. The offense will come around just fine.

It was good to see Nate McLouth square up three balls the last couple of games in San Diego. That will give him confidence to know that he's getting his timing back. Something hasn't been quite right, but he's making progress.

And it was good to see Troy Glaus hit that home run in San Diego (April 15). We felt he'd had a lot of good swings and was close to breaking loose.

It's too early to draw any conclusions. At this point, a Hall of Famer can look like he can't hit at all, and someone that's not a very good hitter can look like a Hall of Famer. That's the way it always is at the start of the season. Everything is magnified because it's such a small sampling. When the same players go through the same type of streaks in the middle of the season, people seldom think twice about it.

We'll take the first 45 days and see how we look then, but so far, it's only been two weeks.

Jason Heyward is showing everyone why we felt so highly about him coming out of spring training. Even when he's had short periods when it looks like the pitchers are getting to him, he's been able to make adjustments and come out of it without getting buried.

That's what's been most impressive so far. We knew he had the ability and would do damage with his bat and play good defense, but no one knows for sure that any player can make the necessary adjustments at this level until he gets here and does it. So far, Jason is showing that he can do it. He's also showing, as he did in spring training, that he's a very strong young man that hits the ball very hard.

Martin Prado is continuing to do what he did last year. Ever since he took over the everyday job at second base late last June, he's been a very significant part of our offense and a very significant part of the team. He came into spring training knowing he had the second base job, and he's continued to build off that as a hitter and in the field.

He was a career .300 hitter in the minors (.302) and he's a career .300 hitter in the majors (.307). It's obvious he can hit. When you have someone like that, it's such a fine line between hitting .300 and having an exceptional season where he hits even higher. But Martin certainly has the potential to put up some really big numbers.

With the exception of the first game in San Diego, we've pitched extremely well. The starters have done what we hoped they would do, and the bullpen has been tremendous. If not for that one game, we'd be near the top in all the major pitching categories. But again, it's such a small sampling that one game has more of an impact on the overall picture than it will once we've played more games.

The starters are going to continue to put us in position to win a lot of games. We just need to score a few more runs, and we know we will. When that happens, the pitching will be even better, because it'll take some of the pressure off the pitchers.

“ JASON HEYWARD IS SHOWING EVERYONE WHY WE FELT SO HIGHLY ABOUT HIM COMING OUT OF SPRING TRAINING. ”

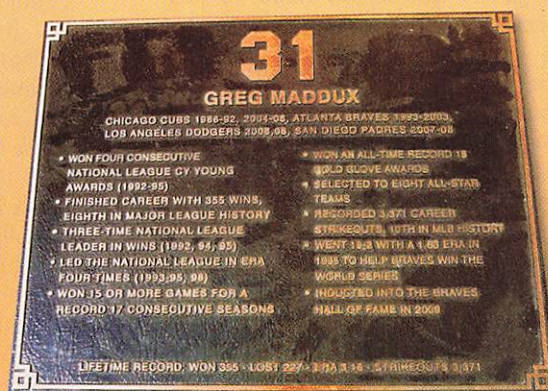


## NEW MONUMENT



This number and plaque are the newest additions to Turner Field's Monument Grove, where Greg Maddux took his place alongside the other retired numbers.

**THE BRAVES** added **Greg Maddux's** No. 31 to the retired number monuments in Monument Grove on the north side of Turner Field. Maddux's number was retired last July 17 when he was inducted into the Braves Hall of Fame. He's only the sixth Brave to be so honored. The others are **Hank Aaron** (44), **Eddie Mathews** (41), **Dale Murphy** (3), **Phil Niekro** (35) and **Warren Spahn** (21). The Braves, as well as all other teams, also retired No. 42 in honor of **Jackie Robinson**.



## MORE PITCHING!

The Braves keep stocking up on pitching - on the field and in the broadcast booth. First it was **Tom Glavine** who took a role as special assistant to the team president that includes some on-air work with Braves games on Fox Sports South and SportSouth. Then **John Smoltz** was hired by Turner Sports to be an analyst as part of the TBS regular season and post-season packages. He also is working as an analyst on 25 Braves games on Peachtree Television with **Joe Simpson** and **Ernie Johnson**. MLB Network also made Smoltz part of its lineup as an analyst, both in-studio and at select games.

## KEEPING UP WITH BOBBY

The Braves created a 96-page commemorative program to honor **Bobby Cox**, who is retiring as manager following this season. It includes a feature from NBC Sports and MLB Network personality **Bob Costas**, an article on Cox's former players and coaches who have gone on to manage, a timeline of his career, and tributes from over 70 people from all walks of life. The program sells for \$10 and is available at

Turner Field concession stands, the Braves Clubhouse Store at CNN Center, or by calling (404) 523-5854.

## HUDDY'S CLUB

The Hudson Family Foundation, founded by **Tim Hudson** and his wife, **Kim**, is celebrating its one-year anniversary by launching a new fundraising initiative called Club One Five, presented by STATS Atlanta restaurant.

Individuals, families and businesses can become Club One Five members by pledging a specific amount of money for every game Hudson wins, every batter he strikes out, every start he makes, and/or the number of innings he pitches during the regular season. All contributions are 100 percent tax deductible and will directly benefit children and families in need throughout Georgia and Alabama.

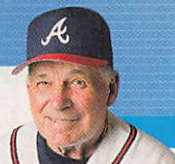
Members who keep their Club One Five pledges going throughout the season, and ultimately donate \$1,000 or more by Oct. 5, will be invited to join Hudson and his friends for an exclusive end-of-season

party to be held at STATS in late October. For more information, contact the Hudson Family Foundation at (404) 584-0095 or download the Club One Five pledge form at [hudsonfamilyfoundation.com](http://hudsonfamilyfoundation.com).

## MUSEUM SPECIALS

In honor of **Bobby Cox's** final season as manager, the Braves Museum at Turner Field has scheduled special \$6 days on anniversaries of milestones in Cox's career. Fans will receive entry to the museum and a Turner Field tour for \$6 on May 21 (Cox's birthday), June 16 (Cox became Braves winningest manager in 1998), July 11 (Cox managed NL in All-Star Game at Turner Field in 2000), Aug. 28 (Cox's 1,500th win in 1999), and Sept. 29 (Cox's 2,000th win in 2004). Turner Field tours, including admission to the Braves Museum, are regularly \$12 for adults, \$7 for children 13 and under, and \$10 for groups of 20 or more. Tickets to the Braves Museum and Turner Field Tours are now available online at [braves.com/tours](http://braves.com/tours).





## JUNIOR BALL

**Kris Medlen** helped celebrate Opening Day of the Junior Braves RBI (Reviving Baseball in Inner Cities) season, April 17 at the Atlanta Braves Baseball Academy at The Villages of Carver YMCA. After leading hitting and fielding skills clinics Medlen spoke to the youth about the four points of Junior Braves Baseball: confidence, integrity, teamwork and leadership. Now in its sixth season, the Junior Braves RBI Youth Baseball League offers more than 3,000 youth from ages 5-18 the opportunity to play baseball.

## MEET THE PLAYERS

Braves players will greet fans and assist customers at several Publix when the "Shop with the Braves" tour returns for a second season. Players will bag groceries, assist in the deli, help prepare Publix samples, and sign autographs. The promotion began April 21 at Johns Creek Publix and will continue May 19 at Cumberland Parkway Publix, June 18 at Carmia Drive Publix, and July 16 at Toco Hills Publix.

Fans also will have the chance to meet several players at the Braves Clubhouse Store at the CNN Center. **Melky Cabrera** signed autographs April 17, and other dates for appearances by yet-to-be-named players from 2-3 p.m. are: June 19, July 17 and Aug. 14.

## TEAMWORK

The Braves have teamed with the Georgia Aquarium, Stone Mountain Park, World of Coca-Cola, and Six Flags Over Georgia for the MVP Ticket Package, which includes admission to all five attractions for \$89, a savings of almost 37 percent. The Most Valuable Package includes: An Outfield Pavilion ticket to any Braves game, a Six Flags Over Georgia admission ticket, a Georgia Aquarium admission ticket, a Stone Mountain One-Day All Attractions Pass, and a World of Coca-Cola admission ticket. The total retail value is \$140.99, for a savings of \$51.99. Several assortments of the above tickets also are available.

## BALLS & STRIKES

 The Beach Boys will perform a free post-game concert on Memorial Day, Monday, May 31, after the Braves-Phillies game at 1:10 p.m.

# THE CAMARADERIE IS WHAT I'LL MISS MOST

**WE LOVED OUR OPENING DAY!** It was great, and it was a great debut for our rookie rightfielder, Jason Heyward. Those first few nights, he put people in the stands at Turner Field and generated a lot of excitement.

I wasn't surprised by what Jason did on Opening Day. The kid is good. But he could easily have gone 0-for-4 with two punchouts. Still, you have the feeling when he's up at the plate that something good is going to happen. I thought it was great for our team, our fans and the city.

I don't pay attention to the "buzz" surrounding him. I don't listen to sports radio or read the paper, but of course I know people are interested in him and are talking about him. I just say, "Don't expect miracles" - and you shouldn't.

If you look at guys like Henry Aaron, Willie Mays, Mickey Mantle... they didn't tear everything up their first year in the big leagues when they were 20 years old. There were two guys that really did, Joe DiMaggio who was 21 and the other, Ted Williams, who was 20. Ken Griffey Jr. hit 16 home runs his first year in the big leagues.

It's fun to get excited and to hope for great things, but you can't expect miracles. That's all... And I don't.

I would be lying if I said there wasn't any special emotion attached to Opening Day this year. They convinced me to take the lineup cards up, and that kind of got to me a little bit. Who knew that shaking hands with (Cubs manager) Lou Piniella would be an emotional experience!

I've known Lou all my baseball life, so it was great that he was the guy on the other side. We both wore No. 14 when we played with the Yankees. I wore it before he did, of course!

I got No. 14 when I started playing with the Yankees. That was the number they gave me, so I stuck with it. When I came to the Braves, they gave me No. 6. I thought that was fine, too, so I kept it. It was very nice of the fans to greet our team and me the way they did. We appreciated it, but now it's time to play ball.

I don't need any outside motivation to get fired up for the season. Baseball is the motivation. It's a great game. I loved playing it and love watching it and being around it. I've been playing the game, been around the game, ever since I was a little kid, and it's never gotten out of my system. The camaraderie is what keeps you in. It's what I'll miss the most.

There's a lot of fun to this game and the people in the game, with the players and coaches, in the clubhouse.

But I've had fun my entire career. Even on losing teams, you have the reward of watching guys work hard and get better. You do the best you can every night, winning or losing. If you get beat, you get beat, but you did everything you could. It's still baseball.

I had this same feeling when I was a player and have felt it at every level. I couldn't wait to get to the park. I still feel that way.

The National League East really is a good division, maybe even the toughest. The Mets will get healthy and added Jason Bay, which is a difference-maker, especially once they get Carlos Beltran back. The Phillies picked up Placido Polanco and Roy Halladay, lost Carlos Lee, and are basically the same. They're always a strong offensive team. They'll be getting Brad Lidge back.

Florida has about the same team as last season, but it's a nice solid, young team. The Nationals are a couple of pitchers away, and they have a couple of pitchers. It's just a matter of time. It will change everything on that team - everything.

THEY CONVINCED ME TO TAKE THE LINEUP CARDS UP, AND THAT KIND OF GOT TO ME A LITTLE BIT.





AUSTIN SHARPES

Billy Wagner, decked out in his Virginia farm-boy finest, signs autographs for fans during spring training at ESPN Wide World of Sports.

INTERVIEW BY  
PATTY RASMUSSEN

**CHOPTALK:** How's your health (Tommy John surgery Sept. 10, 2008)?

**BILLY WAGNER:** I feel as normal as ever. Everything has bounced back. I never had any elbow soreness and, knock on wood, don't have it now. I'm feeling good.

**CT:** Were there any surprises for you coming to the Braves this spring?

**WAGNER:** Not really. I've been around enough to know, talked to enough guys, that I knew what was expected and what their philosophy was.

**CT:** You're working with a couple of new catchers, Brian McCann and David Ross. How has that transition gone?

**WAGNER:** It's gone well. I think they know how I want to go about my business. It will still be a work in progress throughout the first part of the season. It will get better

as we go along, but they've been great to talk to. They're really on top of the game plan. It's been great throwing to them. It's a real combination of who submits to whom in this relationship. It depends on the hitter and how you want to go about starting and going through the game. I think as they've gotten to know me, they know what I like to do and what my game plan is, but they also now know that I'm flexible. If they want to call something that I haven't thought of, I'm not going to look at them as if it has to be my call. There's a lot of communication involved in a good battery, a lot of listening. When you come to a new team, you have to build that relationship, earn your stripes. Each time you're in a situation where you want to do one thing and the catcher wants to do something else and you work it out, the team is getting the idea of who you are and what you're capable of. I'm always glad when the regular season starts, because I do so lousy in spring training. It's like an artificial environment to get your work done. The closer coming in the fifth inning isn't normal. Hitters approach you differently in the fifth inning rather than the ninth. There's only so much you can do. As long as your mechanics, your arm, your body feels good, you're usually going to be just fine.

**CT:** How is your confidence coming into the season? Do you feel like the stud of old?

**WAGNER:** (Laughs) Well, my stuff is there, my velocity, breaking ball and command are there. I can't remember too many spring trainings where I've come out and thought, "Whoa! I'm good!" I give up a ton of hits, I walk guys, hardly strike anyone out. I think most guys are looking at me thinking, "Man, what is with him?"

**CT:** There's been talk of good chemistry on this team and the mix of veteran and young players. What is your take on it, and how much a part does chemistry play in a team's success? Does it really matter whether you like a teammate or not, as long as you're winning?

**WAGNER:** The neat thing about this team is that from day one, there's been complete focus on what we're trying to accomplish and what our goal is - to win a World Series. A lot has been made of the fact that Bobby Cox is retiring, but I don't think that has overshadowed the desire to win a championship. Everyone worked hard in spring and, I'll be honest with you, it was as if we'd all played together before. Troy (Glaus) and I were talking about how easy it was to get along with everyone. Bobby runs a laid-back camp. Now it will be even more exciting when we're all together on a daily basis. In spring training, you don't even have to stay for the whole game. You don't really get to know the guys as well as you do during the season.

**CT:** Will your family (wife, Sarah, and four children) be moving to Atlanta from Virginia?

**WAGNER:** They were in Atlanta for the first week of the season because it was their spring break, but they'll finish school and baseball season up there, then come down here for about two months until school starts again. They love coming to the ballpark.

**CT:** Tell our readers about the education initiative you started in southwest Virginia.

**WAGNER:** Second Chance Learning Center (SCLC) is near and dear to me for a few reasons. The poverty level is so high and the education level is so poor because it's an economically depressed area. Many kids don't have a good family or social environment, and it translates into their schoolwork. You have such a high number of dropouts in the region that we're trying to get to the kids at an early age and give them the attention they need in a variety of areas - academic tutoring, mentoring, social events and experiences, just to build their confidence. We work a lot on that, and we've seen kids that bounce back and do well. We've sent kids to college. Part of the deal when they come to Second Chance is that there is no fee to come. We're a non-profit. We operate on donations, and the southwest Virginia community has really been great. One of the features of our pro-



gram is that if you stay throughout your school career and continue to progress and graduate and you want to go to college, Second Chance will give you the money for college. I think we're putting four kids into college this year, which is the biggest amount we've had so far.

**CT:** What kind of feedback have you gotten from the kids in college?

**WAGNER:** It's been great. We get these letters from kids who got our help and are now moving forward. They tell us what it means to them and what they hope to achieve with it. It's amazing. All we ask is that when they're finished their education and they have their job, whatever it may be, that you give back to the community you're living in some way. It doesn't have to be financial. It could be time, it could be mentoring another kid, whatever. Try to make the area where you're living and working better.

**CT:** So Second Chance completely focuses its attention on southwest Virginia?

**WAGNER:** Yeah, we could have built something that tried to go out and tried to help everybody, but we knew we couldn't do that. We needed to focus in our area, in something that we could do. We've got two schools, one in Tazewell, where I went to school, and one in Bluefield, where my

buddy, Erik Robinson, who runs Second Chance, lives. We're looking at building a couple more schools, one in Pulaski, where my wife is from and which most Braves fans know the old Braves used to be (Pulaski Braves moved to Danville in 1993), and another one up in Waynesboro, near where we live now, in the Charlottesville area.

**CT:** What led you to start Second Chance?

**WAGNER:** The background was that growing up, I moved around quite a bit. I went to 11 schools before I ever got to high school. I really didn't have a good education

in college to get drafted. I don't want kids to have that problem. There are so many kids who fall through the cracks.

**CT:** You work closely with the school system?

**WAGNER:** Right. Teachers and school counselors identify kids who could use the extra help. There's testing available to get an idea of whether or not there are any issues keeping a kid from learning - auditory memory problems, dyslexia, that type of thing. Every kid is different, and if you don't discover it, they're going to struggle. Our

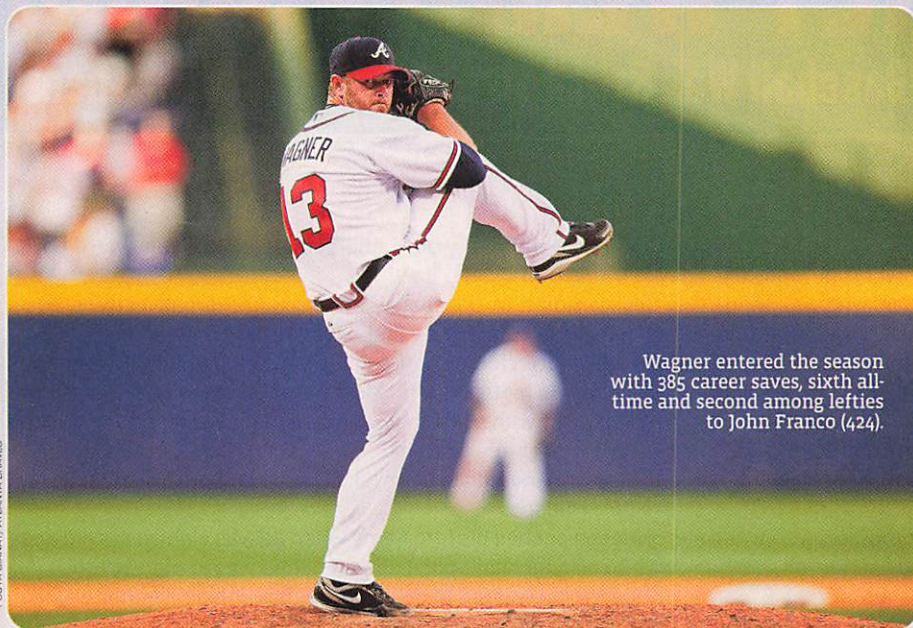
**“ THE NEAT THING ABOUT THIS TEAM IS THAT FROM DAY ONE, THERE'S BEEN COMPLETE FOCUS ON... WHAT OUR GOAL IS - TO WIN A WORLD SERIES. ”**

background. I had to scrape and fight and claw to have that. I got to Tazewell when I was going into the eighth grade. The coaches saw that I had a good arm but would be too old to play high school ball by my senior year, so they socially promoted me through the eighth grade. I never attended eighth grade and went straight into high school. When you're put in that situation, when you're already a struggling student and then skipping a grade and expected to perform in the classroom, it's overwhelming. I was able to do just well enough to get through high school and into college, then good enough

programs just try to give kids tools to have a chance to succeed. Right now, we have about 45 kids who come to our two schools and another "floating" list of students who come in for extra help as needed. And we also provide teachers in other things, like art. We take the students on field trips to show them there's something beyond southwest Virginia.

**CT:** What is your involvement in the program?

**WAGNER:** Well, it was my idea, and my buddy, Erik, runs it. We started it around 2004. It's six or seven years old. We were on a flight, talking. I wanted to do something. I was making some good money, but I wanted it to be something that gave back to the community where I came from in a way that made an impact. I'm the primary donor. I'll go in and give talks to groups and organizations to help raise funds. Erik handles all the day-to-day operations and doesn't get near enough credit for what he does. He's involved in every Rotary Club, civic organization, getting the community in more and more. It's grown really quickly. The community really pitched in. Now we're at the point where we're trying to decide how much we want to grow and keep thriving in its mission. We want to improve on what we have and how we're doing it. We aren't trying to change the world, just trying to help our community become the best it can be, and then go from there.



Wagner entered the season with 385 career saves, sixth all-time and second among lefties to John Franco (424).

PHOTO: DANIEL/ATLANTA BRAVES





Before Chipper Jones played for the Braves, he played for the Twins. But even back then, he was winning awards.

# BEFORE THEY WERE FAMOUS

## Tales Of The Stars When Baseball Was Still A Little Boy's Game For Them

BY RAY GLIER

### "MOMMY? MOMMY? IS SHE DEAD?"

Matt Diaz remembers saying those words when he and his older brother were staring down at their mother, who was lying on the ground. Diaz said he was about five years old, and his mother had been tossing Wiffle ball pitches to her sons. In Diaz's hands was one of those plastic Wiffle ball bats with a barrel big enough for King Kong to use.

Diaz connected and turned around one of his mom's soft tosses. "The ball smacked her right in the middle of the forehead," Diaz said. "She dropped."

Diaz and his brother were scared until their mother, who was pregnant, started moving. She wasn't "dead," after all, just dazed.

A lot of Braves probably could have tattooed their mother with

a ball. Most of them were Little League stars. Many were born with sweet swings.

It's common in baseball. There are basketball players who suddenly grew six inches and became phenoms. There are big kids who were clumsy and suddenly developed nimble feet and morphed into football stars. Most baseball stars, however, show up right away with skills that are so good they sometimes have to play in a higher age bracket.

There are immediate stars, like Diaz, and there are exceptions, like Tim Hudson.

Hudson pitched his first game when he was eight years old and was so wild he didn't pitch again until he was in high school.

"I loved it. I wanted to do it, but the first inning, I either walked every hitter or hit them... didn't get an out. I don't know that I even



threw a strike," said Hudson, who played Little League Baseball in Phoenix City, Ala. "I didn't pitch again until I was a junior in high school, and the only reason I pitched then is we didn't have any pitchers."

It all came to Hudson as a junior. The lively arm, all that movement, was harnessed and off he went to the big leagues.

And Derek Lowe? He must have been a terror with that 6-foot-6 size.

No, not really, he said.

"I remember more about other sports," said Lowe. "I wasn't very good at baseball. My high school career I won two games pitching. I didn't play on any of these travel teams."

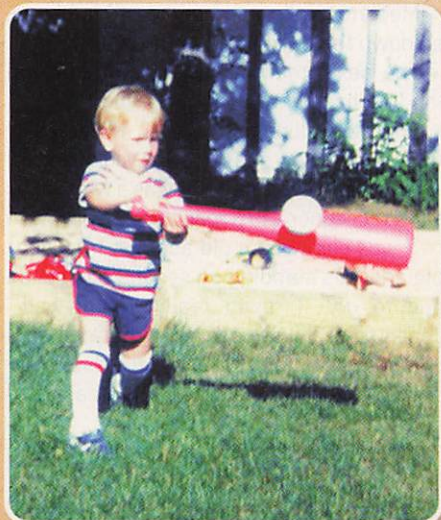
So, if he wasn't a star pitcher, he must have been a slugger. How many home runs did he hit?

"None, not one," he said. "Never hit a home run in my life. Still looking for number one. But I wasn't the poor kid hitting last. I was somewhere in the middle."

Lowe did not pitch much in youth baseball because his dad forbid him to throw breaking balls. All the coaches wanted him to throw the curve, and his dad would not permit it. Now, the tall righthander is good enough to be an Opening Day starter and a two-time All-Star.

Peter Moylan, like Lowe, had a nondescript career as a kid, if measured by home runs. In terms of fun, though, Moylan said it was pure joy.

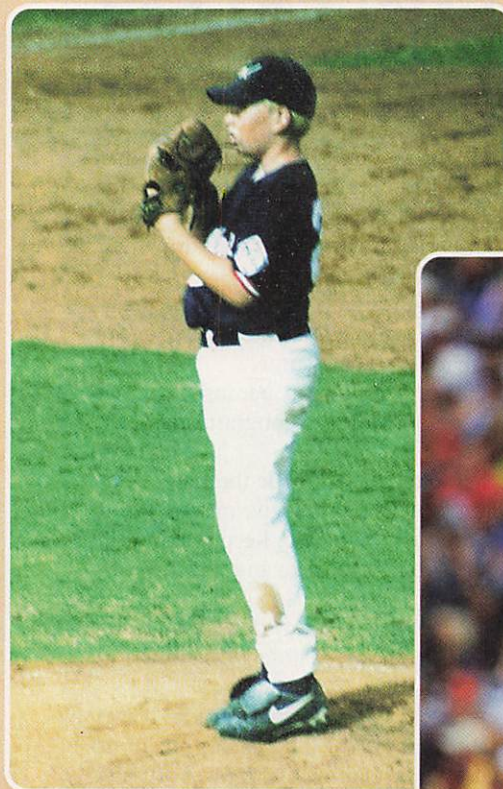
"I was kind of the short, fat, goofy kid," he said, "I wasn't terrible, I wasn't great. I was reasonable, but all my pals treated me the same as them, and we hung out together and we played all kinds of sports, including baseball."



At age 4, Nate McLouth would wait for his pitch and then often hit it on the roof of his family's home in Michigan.

"My parents were supportive, too. They didn't push anything. It was just fun, being a kid."

When he was about 15, Moylan said he had a growth spurt. His arm got stronger,



Tommy Hanson didn't lose many games as a kid pitcher either.

and suddenly, he was on his first elite baseball team. What hasn't changed is his enthusiasm for the game, which he carries around the clubhouse at Turner Field.

Eric O'Flaherty remembers those days of wild pitches, and bug-eyed kids who saw a hard-throwing lefthander on the mound, which made them uneasy in the batter's box. He grew up in Walla, Walla, Washington, and he remembers chucking it as hard as he could.

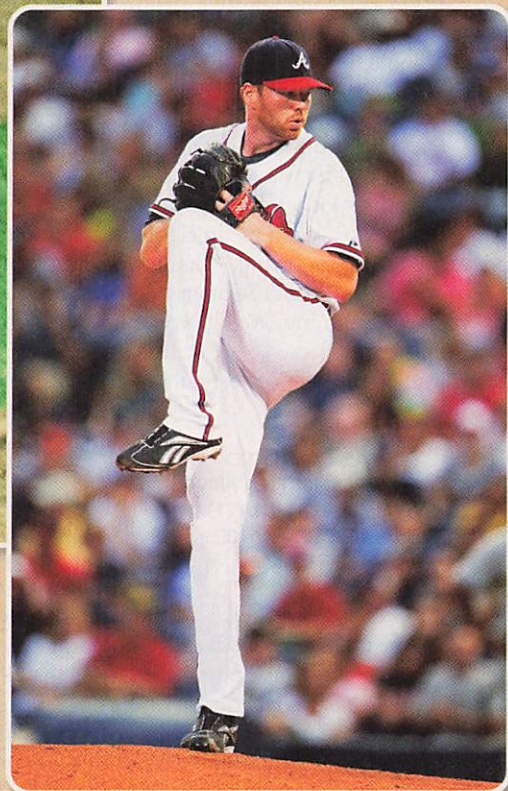
"My control wasn't always good, but kids swing at everything. It was a circus," O'Flaherty said. "I threw the ball all over the place. I just wanted to throw it as hard as I could."

O'Flaherty still remembers his big moment in Little League. His team was ahead in the last inning of the district tournament championship game, but he missed a flyball in right field, and suddenly there were runners on second and third in a one-run game. O'Flaherty was called in to

pitch and get the team out of the jam.

He got the big strikeouts and closed for the win. His team advanced to the state tournament.

Tommy Hanson's team won plenty of games, but it's one they lost that he remembers. He was playing Little League in San Bernadino, Calif., when he was 10 or 11 and his team, managed by his father, was unbeatable, except that day against the Pirates.



The strike zone, Hanson said, could have fit on the end of a pin.

"The other team's coach told his kids don't swing at anything, and we lost on walks," Hanson said. "The umpiring was ridiculous. That was the only game we didn't win that season, and it was like the championship game."

"You're a little kid, and you can't stand it. My dad wouldn't say anything, and he wouldn't let me say anything. I couldn't remember losing another game."

Diaz, of course, kept swinging for the fences. Five years after he knocked out his mother, he hit one out as a "bobblehead" slugger.

When he was nine, Diaz wanted to play

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE





## TELLING MY WIFE AND DAD WERE FUN CALLS!

**EVEN THOUGH** I just turned 30 years old in January, I'm still a rookie. Just not a young rookie! I had a short stint when I played with Oakland (2008), maybe 12 or 13 days before I was sent back down, so that didn't count.

I was actually pretty pleased to go through the rookie hazing last September after I was called up from Triple A. As a kid, you hear about that sort of stuff and think, "That would be fun or cool to go through." But I was out there wearing a Speedo and water wings when I was 29 years old! It was funny, and we had a good time with it.

Making the major league team out of spring training this season was great. It was good to go to spring training with a legitimate chance to make the team, and then to get the word that I'd made it was awesome.

I actually found out I made the team from Joe Thurston, because they told him first that he was going to Gwinnett. He came over to congratulate me on getting the spot on the team.

Bobby Cox called me in right after that to tell me I'd made the team. I was excited and kept saying, "Thank you, thank you!" He didn't give me any words of wisdom just said, "Congratulations, you've won the job. Keep doing what you've been doing. We like you a lot. Keep going out there and playing your game."

I called my wife, Jesse, first, and by the time I talked to my dad, he'd already seen it on the internet. Those were some fun phone calls.

IT WAS GOOD TO GO TO SPRING TRAINING WITH A LEGITIMATE CHANCE TO MAKE THE TEAM.

Joe and I both had a good spring. It was definitely fun. I don't think either one of us looked at it as a competition. We both had the same type of attitude that when you're on the same team with a guy, you're pulling for him to do well.

I came up as a second baseman, so probably the majority of the time I'm in a game it will be at that position. But the last two years, I've really moved around. I've played a little bit of the outfield, shortstop and third, played a little at first base in Triple A. They've been moving me all around, so wherever they need me, I'll be ready because of the experience at those positions.

The only places I haven't played are center field, catcher and pitcher, but I don't think they'll need me at any of those spots!

I started practicing switch-hitting ever since I was a little kid, all the way back to Little League. Around the time I was 12 years old, I started switch-hitting full-time. I don't really have a preference. I'm a natural right-handed hitter, but I hit a lot more left-handed. Throughout the course of the season, I'll have a lot more left-handed at-bats, and that makes me feel more comfortable from the left side. I just have to make sure that I take as many repetitions as I can from each side to stay sharp.

From the bench, it's really important to be focused on the game and as ready as soon as you can. With pinch-hitting, it always feels like the at-bat is more magnified. You have to be focused, hit some balls off the tee to get your swing and your mind working together, be aggressive and do the best you can to put good swings on the ball. It's a little thing for me, but I'm glad I got the experience last year to help me with it this year.

Playing for Bobby Cox last season was awesome. I'd gotten to know him a little bit in spring training, and when I filled in last July, he had me starting in seven or eight games in a row. It was really fun to show what I could do. He's so supportive of you whenever you do something well and even when you're not going well.

CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

on the same team as his 11-year old brother, a team coached by his father. Another manager, aggravated by the skill level in Diaz's house, especially the hitting of 9-year old Matt, protested on the grounds the little Diaz could get hurt by the pitching of bigger kids. The remedy, it was finally agreed to, was to put a helmet on Diaz with a facemask.

The helmet was so big that it was almost as if a birdcage had been put on his head. Diaz said he could barely hold up his head because the helmet was so heavy. He kept trying to move his neck and hold his head up so he could see the pitcher and the flight of the ball, and his head fairly bobbed, side to side.

The Diaz team then played the team coached by the man who suggested Diaz was too fragile to play with the big kids.

"I hit a home run," Diaz said with a grin. "Not a rocket, just one of those high flyball, Little League home runs."

Nate McLouth preferred to be selective before clobbering the ball. His father, Rick, told the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette that Nate would stand in and wait for a pitch to drive. If it wasn't close or a ball he could smear, McLouth let it go. If he liked it, the pitch could end up on the roof of the family's house in Whitehall, Michigan. Nate was only four years old.

Kris Medlen's best story was not as a Little Leaguer, but as a junior college player when he faced Hanson. Medlen was an infielder and pitcher, and he had to stand in the batter's box against Hanson.

"He threw gas," Medlen said. "He owned me... except for one game."

Medlen came up in one game and bunted down the third baseline for a hit.

The next time up, Medlen bunted down the first base line for another hit.

"He was calling me names," Medlen said with a smile. "You gotta do what you gotta do."

Chipper Jones, naturally, was a whiz kid as a Little Leaguer - in a manner of speaking.

"I was eight years old and just hit a double and was standing on second base and I had to go... I mean really, really, bad," Jones said. "I just peed right there on second base. I couldn't help it. I let loose. What are you going to do? It was a nightmare, and I just had to get it over with."

"I kept leading off innings and getting hits, or we kept having to go out to the field, and I just could not run to the nearest tree."

Jones said he got laughed at "forever." His dad told Chipper he should have called timeout.





## 2010 BRAVES HD SCHEDULE

### APRIL

|      |                       |     |         |
|------|-----------------------|-----|---------|
| 4/7  | CHICAGO CUBS          | WED | 7:00 PM |
| 4/8  | CHICAGO CUBS          | THR | 7:00 PM |
| 4/16 | COLORADO ROCKIES      | FRI | 7:30 PM |
| 4/20 | PHILADELPHIA PHILLIES | TUE | 7:00 PM |
| 4/21 | PHILADELPHIA PHILLIES | WED | 7:00 PM |
| 4/22 | PHILADELPHIA PHILLIES | THU | 7:00 PM |
| 4/26 | @ ST. LOUIS CARDINALS | MON | 8:00 PM |
| 4/27 | @ ST. LOUIS CARDINALS | TUE | 8:00 PM |
| 4/28 | @ ST. LOUIS CARDINALS | WED | 8:00 PM |

### MAY

|      |                      |     |         |
|------|----------------------|-----|---------|
| 5/14 | ARIZONA DIAMONDBACKS | FRI | 7:30 PM |
| 5/17 | NY METS              | MON | 7:00 PM |
| 5/18 | NY METS              | TUE | 7:00 PM |
| 5/19 | CINCINNATI REDS      | WED | 7:00 PM |
| 5/28 | PITTSBURGH PIRATES   | FRI | 7:30 PM |

### JUNE

|      |                       |     |         |
|------|-----------------------|-----|---------|
| 6/1  | PHILADELPHIA PHILLIES | TUE | 7:00 PM |
| 6/15 | TAMPA BAY RAYS        | TUE | 7:00 PM |
| 6/16 | TAMPA BAY RAYS        | WED | 7:00 PM |
| 6/17 | TAMPA BAY RAYS        | THU | 7:00 PM |
| 6/18 | KANSAS CITY ROYALS    | FRI | 7:30 PM |
| 6/22 | @ CHICAGO WHITE SOX   | TUE | 8:00 PM |
| 6/23 | @ CHICAGO WHITE SOX   | WED | 8:00 PM |
| 6/25 | DETROIT TIGERS        | FRI | 7:30 PM |
| 6/28 | WASHINGTON NATIONALS  | MON | 7:00 PM |
| 6/29 | WASHINGTON NATIONALS  | TUE | 7:00 PM |

### JULY

|      |                         |     |         |
|------|-------------------------|-----|---------|
| 7/2  | FLORIDA MARLINS         | FRI | 7:30 PM |
| 7/5  | @ PHILADELPHIA PHILLIES | MON | 7:00 PM |
| 7/6  | @ PHILADELPHIA PHILLIES | TUE | 7:00 PM |
| 7/7  | @ PHILADELPHIA PHILLIES | WED | 7:00 PM |
| 7/15 | MILWAUKEE BREWERS       | THU | 7:00 PM |
| 7/16 | MILWAUKEE BREWERS       | FRI | 7:30 PM |
| 7/20 | SAN DIEGO PADRES        | TUE | 7:00 PM |
| 7/21 | SAN DIEGO PADRES        | WED | 7:00 PM |

### AUGUST

|      |                      |     |         |
|------|----------------------|-----|---------|
| 8/3  | NY METS              | TUE | 7:00 PM |
| 8/4  | NY METS              | WED | 7:00 PM |
| 8/5  | SAN FRANCISCO GIANTS | THU | 7:00 PM |
| 8/6  | SAN FRANCISCO GIANTS | FRI | 7:30 PM |
| 8/13 | LOS ANGELES DODGERS  | FRI | 7:30 PM |
| 8/14 | LOS ANGELES DODGERS  | SAT | 7:00 PM |
| 8/16 | LOS ANGELES DODGERS  | MON | 7:00 PM |
| 8/30 | NY METS              | MON | 7:00 PM |
| 8/31 | NY METS              | TUE | 7:00 PM |

### SEPTEMBER

|      |                     |     |         |
|------|---------------------|-----|---------|
| 9/1  | NY METS             | WED | 7:00 PM |
| 9/2  | NY METS             | THU | 7:00 PM |
| 9/9  | ST. LOUIS CARDINALS | THU | 7:00 PM |
| 9/10 | ST. LOUIS CARDINALS | FRI | 7:30 PM |







Bobby Cox (front row, wearing jacket) poses with the first Little League team in his hometown of Selma, Calif., when he was 11 years old and already an outstanding player in 1952.

# IN THE BEGINNING

Everyone That Knew Bobby Cox Back In Selma Never Doubted His Passion For Baseball

BY PATTY RASMUSSEN

**BASEBALL** was always Bobby Cox's passion, right from earliest childhood. Katherine Cox, who married Bobby's uncle, Ray, remembers the first time she saw her nephew.

"I had just joined the Cox family," said Katherine, 83. "We went by their family's house. Bobby was probably three and a half years old and was in the yard playing catch with his dad, J.T. I always tell people, the first time I ever saw Bobby he had a ball in his hand, and he still has one in his hand to this day."

Cox's aunt remembers him as a likeable, reserved child.

"He was very quiet when he was growing up, and he hasn't changed," she said. "He's a pleasant, soft-talking man."

And, in spite of her nephew holding the dubious honor of being ejected from a record 154 major league games, Katherine said she never saw him get angry at anyone.

"He got along with everybody," she added. "He wasn't a big show off as a kid, and I never heard him criticize anyone."

Though he generally hates talking about himself, Cox doesn't seem to mind reminiscing about his childhood, growing up in the rural farming community of Selma, located in California's Central Valley region, 200 miles southeast of San Francisco. The Coxes were a large, sprawling family. His father was the third of

12 siblings who lived mostly in Texas and Oklahoma.

Cox was born in Tulsa on May 21, 1941, and three years later, around 1944, the family moved to Selma.

They followed the Cox matriarch, Bernice, who was widowed with three young children living in Arizona when friends told her she could find steady work in Selma in the fruit packing houses. After she moved to Selma, all 12 of her children, including J.T. and his family, wife Willamae and children, Joy and Bobby, moved to Selma, setting down roots in the region. Over 125 descendants

attended a Cox family reunion held in Selma last year, and that wasn't even all of them!

"This was a family that did a lot of things," said Cox. "No one shirked work. They didn't have jobs when they came out here and got to it to find jobs."

His father found work at a local agricultural/irrigation pump company. Eventually Cox's uncles, Junior, Ray, and Grover, worked there, too.

"They could build anything," said Cox. "They had a machine shop or had access to one. They made my baseball cleats, and my dad built a pitching machine from scratch."

His was a working class family, living in a modest, three-bedroom house. Cox's mother worked at the bakery in town, often

FOURTH IN A SERIES  
#6 THE FINAL SEASON



bringing home baked goods in the afternoon. "Everyone worked hard, even the kids when they were old enough," said Cox, who spent a fair amount of time picking fruit and working in the packing houses (Selma claims to be the "raisin capital of the world") in his teens, 10 to 12 hours a day in the summer for \$1 an hour. Though not affluent by any means, Cox and his sister, Joy, two years older, never went without.

Their formative years were spent mostly with family, running in and out of aunts' and uncles' homes, playing with cousins, doing chores or school-work. Often Sundays were spent at Grandma Bernice's house where there was always a home-cooked meal and plenty of children to play with. Cox had several boy cousins his age and would even play with the younger children.

"It really was a great place to grow up," said Cox.

Modesty and hard work were Cox family traits, but they also shared a love of baseball, playing it, listening to games on the radio, and later watching on television.

"It seemed like the whole town revolved around baseball, because the town was small and everyone loved it, a lot of people played," said Cox. "We played almost all year round."

Cox's father made picture frames out of baseball bats to display baseball cards in his son's bedroom.

"The frames didn't have glass, just the frames," Cox said. "I'd stick the cards inside them. We used to ride our bikes to the grocery store and bang on the door, even after it was closed, so we could go in and buy five-cent baseball cards. I kept getting the same guys! I got 'Rip' Repulski, Joe Tipton and Irv Noren."

"They were baseball crazy early on," said Sandra Ott, Cox's cousin. "On Saturdays, our dads worked half days at the shop, and at 1 o'clock, we'd all gather at Junior's house to eat bologna sandwiches and watch the baseball game."

"If there was a baseball family in Selma, it was the Coxes," said Dick Forney, the husband of Cox's younger cousin, Janet Forney, daughter of Junior Cox. "The thing was, you'd never hear them talk about their accomplishments."

Janet was 12 years younger than her cousin, Bobby, but remembers going to Fresno to watch him play baseball as a teenager.

In March 2010, the Cox brothers, Grover, Ray and Junior, were inducted into the Selma Athletic Hall of Fame. In addition to playing baseball themselves, the three brothers are credited with establishing Little League Baseball in Selma. Grover and Junior

founded and coached the team in 1952 when their nephew, Bobby, who was already an outstanding ballplayer, was 11 years old. Several years later, brother Ray was responsible for raising the funds to build the town's Little League field.

The Selma "Little Giants" played their first game on June 8, 1952. According to Randy McFarland, the former editor of the weekly newspaper, the Selma Enterprise, and author of

'Centennial Selma,' a history of the town, the Little Giants defeated a hand-picked team from nearby Fresno in the debut game. Cox, the starting pitcher, recorded five strikeouts in 5 1/3 innings.

"He was a heck of an athlete," recalled McFarland. "From Little League all the way through high school."

Cox was even selected to play on a traveling baseball team while he was in eighth grade. "He was playing second base on a team with 20-year-olds, and he was just 14," recalled Jerry Lund, Cox's best friend then and now.

"He and I have been friends from first grade on," said Lund. "We got our first jobs together, we played ball together. The remarkable thing about Bobby was that he lived like he always knew he was going to do something big, and he would not do any mischief."

Lund said he and Cox often "cruised Selma" with other guys in high school.

"If someone got a harebrained idea to toilet paper a house or throw water balloons, Bobby would say, as nice as ever, 'Just let me out. I'll walk home.' No one ever thought less of him, and he never made you feel bad either."

"That kind of stuff just wasn't in me," said Cox. "I think it was the way I was raised. It goes back to my father. He was a no-nonsense type of guy."

Lund remembers young Cox as quiet to the point of shyness.

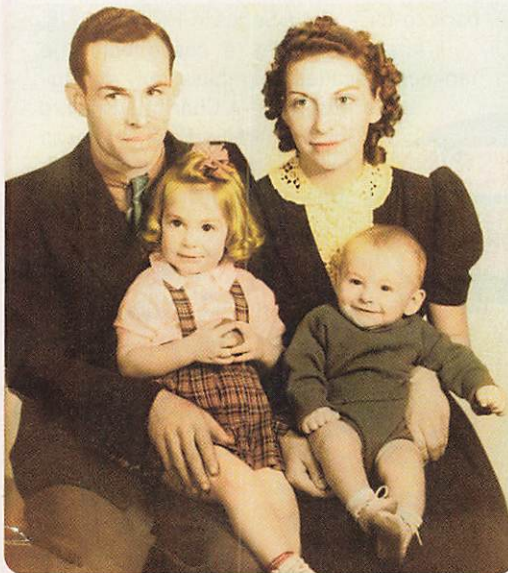
"He really hated to get up in front of class to speak," said Lund.

But baseball gave Cox confidence. Lund told of an off-season Hot Stove League dinner when 19-year-old Cox was called on to speak.

"He totally surprised me," said Lund. "He got up and gave a great talk."

Cox was a standout second baseman in high school, playing on the varsity all four years. He was coached by - among others - Selma High School's legendary Allen Cropsey throughout his junior high and high school career.

Former Braves bench coach Pat Corrales, now a special assistant to the general manager with the Washington Nationals, played against Cox in high school. Corrales was a "city boy," liv-



Cox's father, J.T., and mother, Willamae, with their two children, Bobby and his sister, Joy, in a family portrait. Below, Cox, at age 13, poses with his cousin, Janet.



PHOTOS SPECIAL

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE



# Gene Garber Recalls His "World Series" Moment On Cox's Terrible First Team

BY PATTY RASMUSSEN

**THE PHILLIES** were en route to winning the NL East in June 1978, when they sent reliever Gene Garber to the Braves in exchange for righthander Dick Ruthven. The Braves, under first-year manager Bobby Cox were on their way to losing 93 games and finishing last in the NL West.

Garber, who also lived near Philadelphia, was not a happy camper when the deal was made. Nevertheless he enjoyed one of the highlights of his career on Aug. 1, playing for Cox. It's a story that Garber said, "Epitomizes what Bobby's like."

"We had a terrible club," admitted Garber. "There were a couple thousand fans in the seats [actually, attendance was 31,159 at Atlanta-Fulton County Stadium due to the excitement created by Rose's streak], but the [Cincinnati] Reds were in town, and Pete Rose had his hit streak going. I came into the game in the seventh inning with no outs and the team ahead, 6-3. Rose hit a line drive right at [third baseman] Bob Horner, and we doubled up the runners on base.

"When I got back to the dugout, Bobby said he wanted to bring in another pitcher. I told him I wanted to end the streak, but he told me, 'No. I want you to pitch tomorrow night.' I told Bobby I would start and go nine innings tomorrow if he'd let me finish it tonight. He understood that it meant a lot to me and said, 'Garb, go get him! Good luck!'"

Garber returned to the game and, in the ninth inning, faced Rose again. After running the count to 2 and 1, Garber buckled down and threw two more pitches, striking out Rose swinging to end the streak at 44 games, tied for the longest in National League history with "Wee" Willie Keeler.

"Bobby remembered what it was like to be a player," said Garber. "He knew that meant so much to me. That moment was my World Series that year."

First baseman Chris Chambliss was a seasoned and successful veteran when he was traded to the Braves in 1980 (from Toronto, for whom he never played, with Luis Gomez in exchange for Barry Bonnell, Joey McLaughlin and Pat Rockett). Like Garber, he came from a winning team. Chambliss

played for the New York Yankees, who won back-to-back World Series in 1977 and 1978.

"I knew Bobby as a coach with the Yankees," recalled Chambliss, now manager of the Triple-A Charlotte Knights (Chicago White Sox). "He was my first base coach in 1977. One of my favorite memories

## STORIES OF BOBBY



Chris Chambliss played for the Yankees in 1977 when Cox was their first base coach, then came to the Braves in 1980 when Cox was in his third year as manager.

of Bobby was him throwing batting practice to us, getting us ready for the World Series in 1977. He loved throwing BP. Then three years later, I was traded and got to experience what it was like to be managed by him."

The experience was a boon to Chambliss, both then and now.

"He knows the formula for winning," he said. "It's discipline and consistency."

But, Cox's discipline is more than a list of rules and regulations.

"It's all about expectations," said Chambliss. "He expects players to play the right way, to carry themselves the right way. He doesn't take attitude, and it's something that players admire."

Chambliss said Cox's managerial template is one he's brought to his clubhouse.

"I've tried to take something from everyone I've played for," said Chambliss. "Bobby was a great role model. He's sincere and dedicated about every aspect of the game. But the consistency he showed was really his hallmark and the mark of a Hall of Fame manager."

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 27

ing in Fresno, about 15 miles from Selma.

Although Corrales didn't know Cox personally at the time, everyone on the baseball team at Fresno High School had heard of him.

"Bobby was the best athlete they had, the best player on the team," Corrales said. "And he was as good as we had heard. We tried to get the people out who were in front of him. He could hit. We didn't want anyone on the bases when Bobby came up."

Cox was as successful on the football field as he was on the baseball diamond. The quarterback of the Selma High School Bears, he was offered scholarships to several colleges for football, but baseball was his passion. In his senior year of high school, Cox had an operation on his arm at Stanford University Hospital and wasn't able to play baseball that spring. He graduated from high school in June 1959 without a clear picture of what he would do.

"I could throw a football but not a baseball," said Cox. "I didn't know what I was going to do."

But his baseball abilities caught the attention of Red Adams, a long-time scout for the Dodgers, who asked Cox to go with him to Los Angeles to try out.

"How he found out about me, I don't know," said Cox.

Even though he was still unable to throw, he could hit, and apparently his reputation spoke volumes. Cox signed a contract with the Dodgers, and received a \$40,000 bonus, significant money in 1959. At the request of his parents, Cox attended college that fall at nearby Reedley Junior College, but baseball beckoned. He left after one semester and began pursuing his professional baseball career.

On June 24, 1960, at John Eulless Ball Park in Fresno, prior to a game between the Reno Silver Sox and the Fresno Giants, the city of Selma celebrated Bobby Cox Night. The town turned out to cheer their quiet, well-liked and talented favorite son as he embarked on his chosen profession.

Throughout his life, Cox's mother, Willamae, clipped articles and pictures from the local newspaper, eventually cutting stories and photos from The Sporting News and other national magazines and newspapers as his career continued.

"She was a fanatic about it," said Sandra Ott. "She cut every newspaper





article, saved everything."

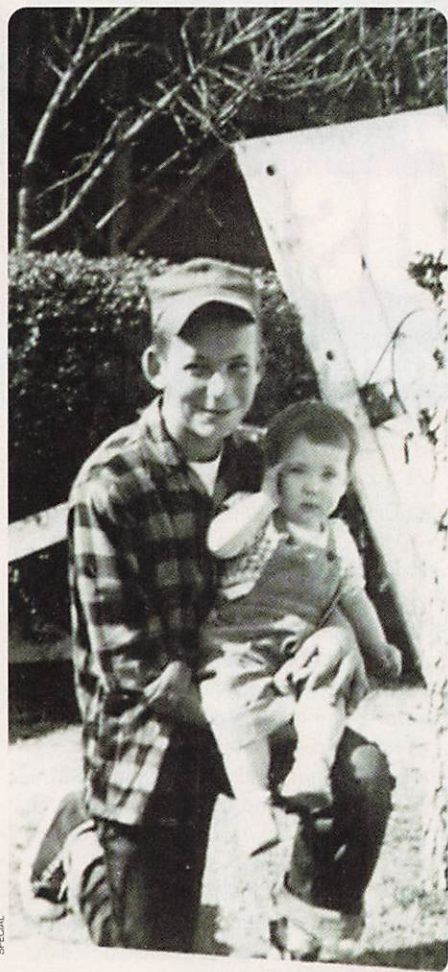
By the time she died, Willamae had filled 18 scrapbooks with mementos of her son's life from Little League to the major leagues. Cox has the albums boxed and safely stored.

Cox's life story amazes even those who know him best.

"You take where we came from and you'd never imagine it," said Lund. "When we were in high school, the baseball team took a trip to San Francisco to see the Giants play. We went to old Seal Stadium and watched those professional players. All of us wanted to play, but Bobby did it."

"There's no way I could have imagined my life as it is now back then," said Cox. "I've had a great life, and I owe it to my family and to baseball."

**NEXT MONTH: PART FIVE**



SPECIAL

As a youngster, Cox, seen holding his cousin Janet, was immersed in two things - a large family and his love of sports, particularly baseball.

## IS D-BACKS' DAN HAREN MOST UNSUNG PITCHER?

**DIAMONDBACKS** righthander **Dan Haren** might be the most unsung elite pitcher in baseball. D-backs GM **Josh Byrnes** points out that Haren's ERA-plus the past three seasons - that is, his ERA adjusted to his league and park - is comparable to those of the Phillies' **Roy Halladay** and the Yankees' **CC Sabathia**.

How crazy was the Mets' 2-1 victory over the Cardinals in 20 innings April 17? The teams combined for 35 strikeouts - nearly six full innings' worth. The Mets failed to score in the 18th inning with **Felipe Lopez**, a Cardinals infielder, on the mound and **Kyle Lohse**, a pitcher, playing left field. Mets second baseman **Luis Castillo** sacrificed against another St. Louis position player-turned-pitcher, **Joe Mather**, after a leadoff walk to **Jose Reyes** in the 19th. Yes, the Mets actually gave away an out against Mather, as if Reyes could not have stolen second on him.

The Rockies boast five legitimate outfielders and quality backups at other spots, and their depth also extends to the minors. They can draw replacements from within and also use their prospects to make trades. Righthander **Jhoulys Chacin** and **Samuel Deduno** and lefthander **Rex Brothers** are among the young pitchers who could help the major league club this season.

Scouts said all spring and early in the season that Phillies leftfielder **Raul Ibanez** was showing diminished bat speed. Ibanez turns 38 on June 2, and the Phils owe him \$11.5 million in each of the next two seasons.

Shortly after the Yankees traded for outfielder **Curtis Granderson**, manager **Joe Girardi** received a call from a woman who said she babysat him when he was growing up in Peoria, Ill. The woman, **Debbie Carr**, told Girardi that she also was Granderson's advisor at Thornton Fractional South High School in Lansing, Ill. What's more, her son, **Jake**, played baseball at the same university as Granderson - Illinois-Chicago.

Rays manager **Joe Maddon** says of Orioles catcher **Matt Wieters**: "No doubt in my mind, he's the next Mauer." Maddon notes that Wieters, like the Twins' **Joe Mauer**, has a knack for putting balls in play and "missing defenders." Mauer owns a career batting average of nearly .350 on balls in play. The major league average usually is around .300.

Yankees outfielder **Randy Winn**, a teammate of **Edgar Renteria**'s with the Giants last season, says the shortstop's elbow was more of an issue than anyone outside the team knew. Winn says Renteria, a former Brave (2006-07) who's off to a good start after hitting just .250 last year, never complained, never made excuses, but he ultimately required surgery to remove two centimeter-long chunks of calcified matter from his elbow.

Some rival scouts believe that the Brewers will need to add a catcher, citing **Gregg Zaun**'s slow offensive start and **George Kottaras**' shaky receiving. The Brewers, however, are more likely to turn to one of their two catching prospects: **Angel Salome**, who is beginning his second straight year at Triple A, or the more highly regarded **Jonathan Lucroy**, who is beginning his second straight year at Double A.

- KEN ROSENTHAL IS A SENIOR WRITER FOR FOXSPORTS.COM





Hank Aaron prepares to cut the ribbon to dedicate the new Hank Aaron Childhood Home and Museum in Mobile with the assistance of (L-R) Hall of Famer Reggie Jackson, Aaron's wife, Billye, his sister, Alfredia Scott, MLB commissioner Bud Selig and Mobile mayor Sam Jones.

# NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM

Aaron Calls All-Star Turnout For Mobile Dedication The "Greatest Day" Of His Life

BY BENJAMIN HILL OF MLB.COM

**H**ANK AARON'S OLD HOUSE will always have a home, thanks to an unprecedented effort by his native city's minor league baseball team.

The Mobile BayBears of the Double-A Southern League transported the legendary slugger's childhood residence to the grounds of aptly named Hank Aaron Stadium, a 6,000-seat facility that opened in 1997. The extensively renovated single-family dwelling now has a new lease on life as the "Hank Aaron Childhood Home and Museum."

Filled with mementos and artifacts donated by Aaron and his family, as well as the Baseball Hall of Fame and the Negro League Baseball Museum, this unique learning center serves as a lasting testament to a truly spectacular baseball career.

"I have had great things happen to me, but today is the greatest day I have ever had in my entire life," Aaron said.

The museum opened to the public prior to the BayBears' home opener April 14, and the long list of VIP guests on hand to celebrate the occasion included commissioner Bud Selig and a formidable sextet of Cooperstown enshrinees: Willie Mays, Bob Feller, Rickey Henderson, Bruce Sutter, Reggie Jackson and Ozzie Smith. The Wizard (Smith) is a fellow Mobile native, one of

five denizens of the Azalea City to go on to a Hall of Fame baseball career.

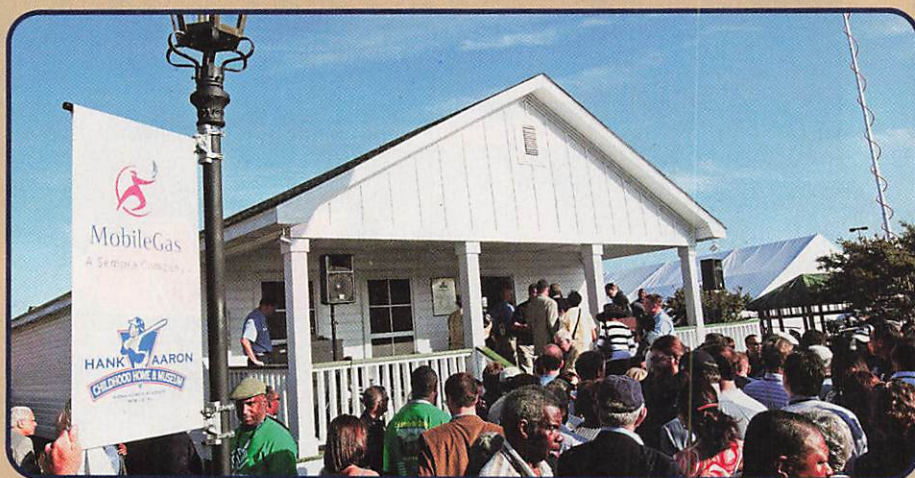
All seven rooms of the museum are packed with memorabilia, allowing visitors to take a chronological journey through the life and times of Aaron. Baseball dominates the narrative, of course, but family heirlooms and the inherent modesty of the structure shine a light on the African-American experience in the Jim Crow South. The museum, therefore, stands as a dramatic testament to Aaron's transcendence of these circumstances.

"This is a wonderful personal honor, and I hope it inspires the boys and girls of Mobile to dream big, and to work hard so that they can see their dreams realized," said Aaron, standing on the front porch of where he used to call home.

The house, which had previously stood in Mobile's Toumanville neighborhood, went through many incarnations even before being converted into a museum. Aaron's father, Herbert, constructed the house in 1942, using scrap wood as his primary material. The home lacked both a kitchen and bathroom until well into its second decade, and later additions included a brick façade (since removed) and additional rooms. But the family remained put through it all, with Aaron's mother, Estella, living in the house until

PHOTOS: DAVE MARTIN/GETTY IMAGES





that Aaron was an inspiration to every ballplayer that ever played the game, while Jackson lauded him as a "tremendous family man, tremendous husband and a great American."

Selig has enjoyed a long friendship with Aaron, one that dates back to their days together in Milwaukee.

"I've known Henry and members of his family for a long time... as a kid I watched him hit a home run for the Milwaukee Braves that won the 1957 pennant against the St. Louis Cardinals," said Selig. "We have both been on incredible journeys, but he has become even more of an American icon than he was in 1973 or '74. He's

shortly before her death in 2005.

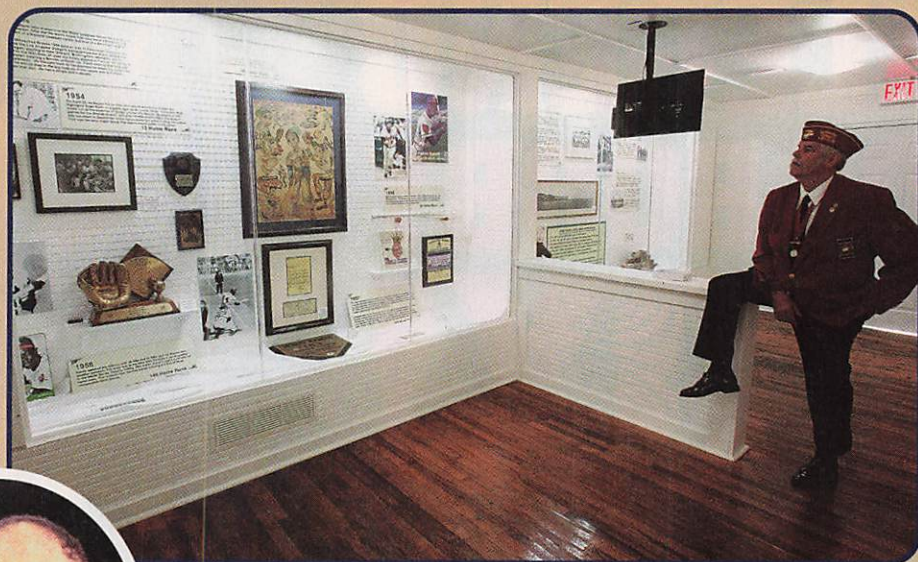
Alfredia Aaron-Scott, Hank's younger sister, recalled the home's humble origins during the museum's opening reception.

"My mother took wood from the dump, wood that others had abandoned," she said. "And that's the way they put it together, one room at a time. My mother would have loved [the museum]. She would enjoy the opportunity to let others see how we lived and how others lived. I want people to remember this as the home that Estella and Herbert built."

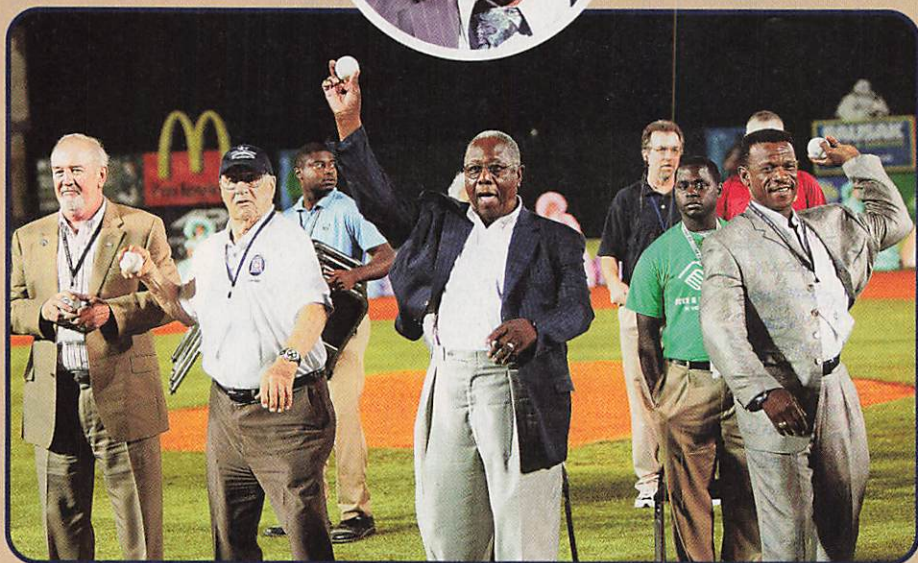
In addition to family members, the opening reception included brief speeches from five of the Hall of Fame guests.

"I always admired Hank from afar, but for more than the excitement he created on the field," Smith said. "I admire the man for his integrity. He's exemplary of what baseball should be."

Henderson simply stated



(Top to bottom) A crowd convenes for a look at the home where Aaron grew up that now includes memorabilia displays like the one a worker surveys. Later, the great Willie Mays tips his cap to the crowd at Hank Aaron Stadium, where Aaron, with fellow Hall of Famers (L-R) Bruce Sutter, Bob Feller and Rickey Henderson deliver ceremonial pitches.



become an American icon because of the way he's conducted himself, in every way, shape, form or manner.

"Every athlete who plays the game today or in the future should take a look at Henry Aaron."

The festivities soon relocated to the playing field as Aaron and the assemblage of big-name guests were introduced to the sold-out Hank Aaron Stadium crowd after being chauffeured down the first-base line in vintage automobiles.

The only player to rival Aaron's rapturous reception was the "Say Hey Kid," who lauded Aaron's positive attributes while poking fun at their advanced age.

"I still like to call you my friend," said Mays to Aaron. "Even though we cannot run."



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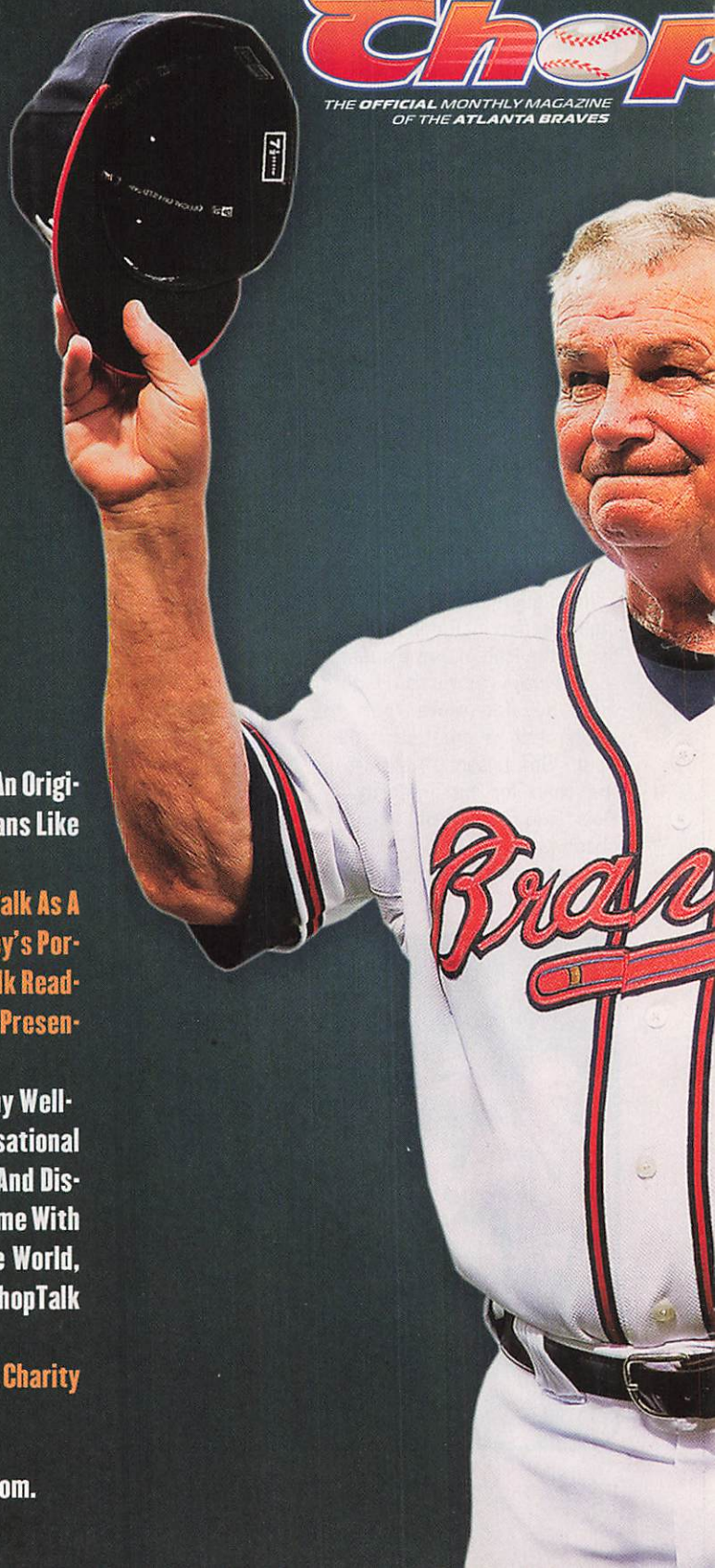
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Acclaimed Artist Steve Penley Is Leading The Way By Creating An Original Portrait Of Cox That Will Be Presented To Him - From You And Fans Like You - At The End Of The Season.

This Portrait Will Be Published In The September Issue Of ChopTalk As A Special 8-Page Poster Insert. The Front Of The Poster Will Be Penley's Portrait. The Back Of The Poster Will Contain The Names Of All ChopTalk Readers And Braves Fans Who Would Like To Join In Making This Unique Presentation To Cox.

This Is Certain To Be One Of The Most-Unique Items Of The Many Well-Deserved Gifts And Honors Cox Will Receive This Season: A Sensational Portrait, Created Just For Him By An Artist Whose Work Is Owned And Displayed By Many Prominent Collectors. More Importantly, It Will Come With The Best Wishes And Appreciation Of The Best Braves Fans In The World, Whose Names He'll Also Receive On A Reproduction Of The ChopTalk Poster.

A Portion Of The Proceeds From This Project Will Be Donated To A Charity Of Bobby Cox's Choice.



\* Learn More About Steve Penley And His Work At: [stevepenley.com](http://stevepenley.com).



A close-up photograph of a man, likely a coach or manager, wearing a white baseball jersey. The jersey has red and blue trim around the V-neck collar and the sleeve cuffs. On the left chest, there is a large red 'A' logo with a yellow and red design inside. The man is looking down and to the left.

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Maximum 30 Characters, Including Spaces.**

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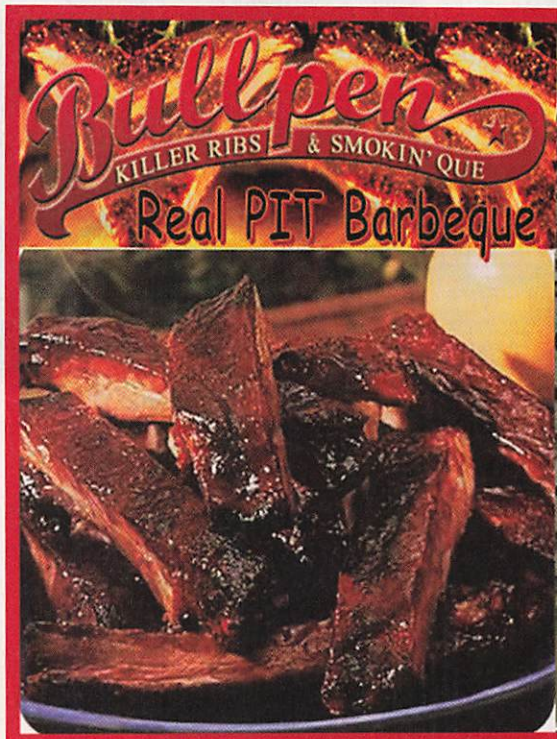
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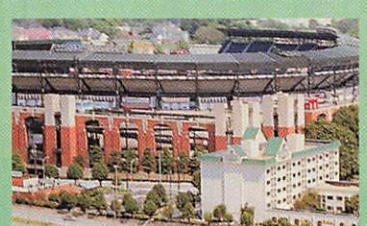
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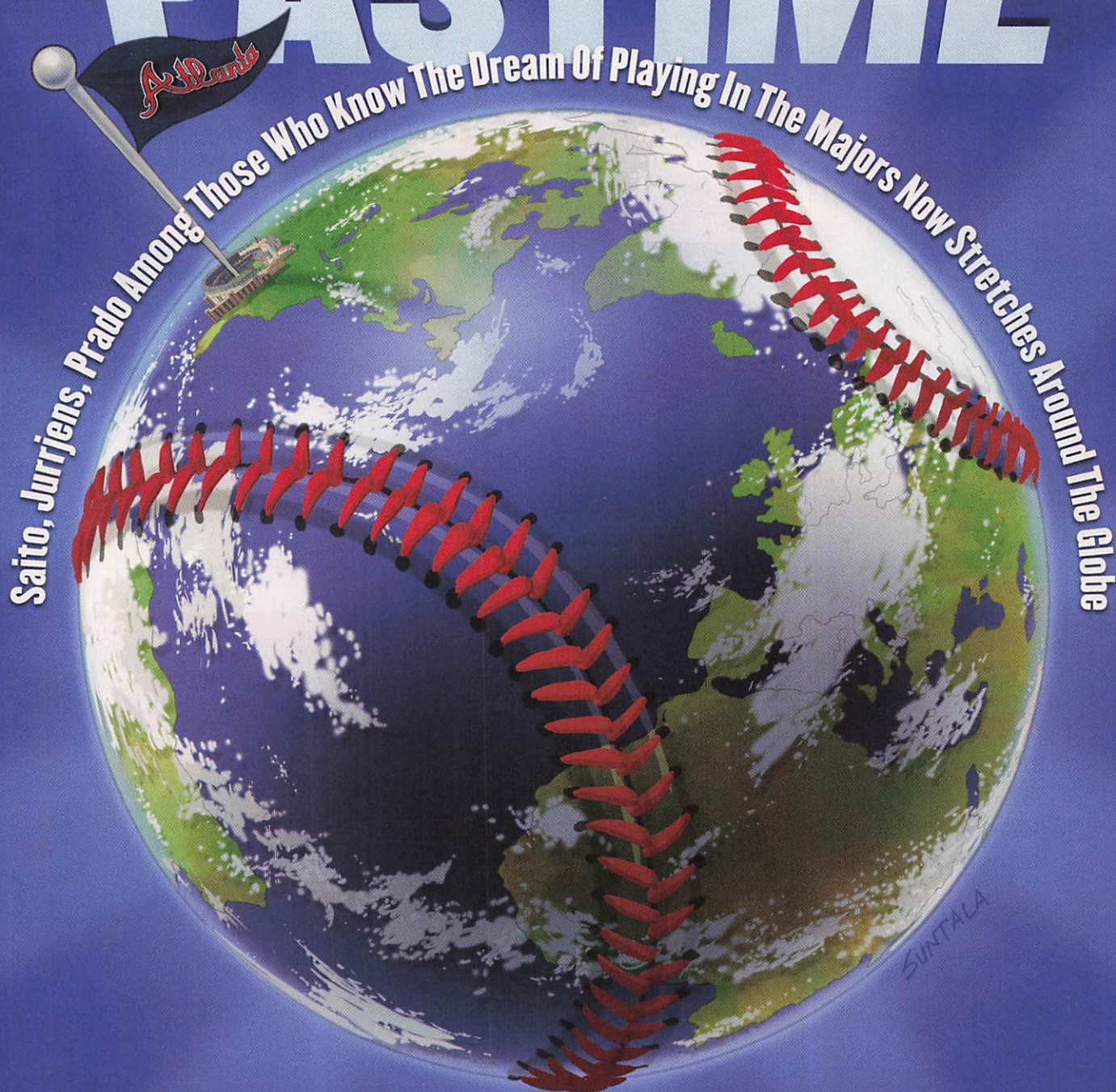
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# INTERNATIONAL PASTIME



BY JON COOPER



**A**s America's national pastime has gone global, the American dream of playing in the major leagues has become the dream of kids around the world.

"Every young kid who picks up a baseball bat envisions himself in a major league uniform. That's been an American dream, and that dream has spread to other parts of the world," said Johnny Almaraz, the Braves' director of international scouting and operations, who supervises a network of scouts that seek the most talented of those kids to help make their dreams come true.

"Some of the international players who have accomplished that are role models for kids in their own countries to achieve that dream, and it keeps growing year by year."

There are plenty of such role models throughout the Braves' organization, which boasts international representation from 18 different nations - besides the U.S. - around the globe, accounting for 130 of the 266 players (49 percent) in the Atlanta organization.

For me, it was a dream that came true," said Jose Martinez, a native of Cardenas, Cuba, who's currently a special assistant to Braves general manager Frank Wren. Martinez played two seasons with Pittsburgh (1969-70) and has been in pro baseball in various capacities since 1960.

"Every player who wears a uniform has a dream that he will play in the major leagues someday,"

Martinez continued. "I was very happy that I played in the major leagues, but also because I represented my country. We had so many Cuban players. I felt that I was very lucky to be one of them."

As in the U.S., the major league dream starts very early in other countries.

"I began getting into [baseball] when I was around 13, 14," said 24-year-old pitcher Jair Jurrjens, from Willemstad, Curacao. "My dad was telling stories about all the legends who played the game, and I watched my big brother play. That's when I really started getting into baseball."

"Always I've been thinking big in my life," said 26-year-old Martin Prado, a native of Maracay, Venezuela. "Playing in the bigs was one of the big things for me. I'm thankful for having the opportunity to be part of this team. It's a blessing for me."

Jurrjens and Prado remembered being inspired by - and closely following - their countrymen who made it to the big leagues. Jurrjens points to the impact throughout Curacao made by long-time Braves center-fielder Andruw Jones (once a teammate of Jurrjens' brother on the island), while Prado lists countrymen Omar Vizquel, former Braves first baseman Andres Galarraga, Melvin Mora and Magglio Ordonez as his role models.

As the game expanded globally, doors opened throughout the world, and places



The success of Andres Galarraga and other fellow Venezuelans helped inspire Martin Prado.

like Asia and Australia, which had been considered afterthoughts for baseball, became viable areas to explore for talent.

Older current Braves such as Takashi Saito of Miyagi City, Japan, and Peter Moylan from Lesmurdie, Australia, also point to trailblazing countrymen as inspirations for wanting to reach the big leagues. But, unlike Jurrjens, Prado and other younger players primarily from Latin America and the Caribbean, Saito and Moylan had a sense of urgency for fulfilling their goal of playing in the bigs later in life.

"I didn't really have a dream of playing Major League Baseball, but after my 10th year in Japan, I started to feel that I wanted to give it a shot over here," said Saito, who pitched 14 years for Yokohama of the Japanese Central League, where he was a rival of Braves teammate Kenshin Kawakami.

Saito cited the arrival of Hideo Nomo with the Dodgers in 1995 as the country's tipping point for MLB popularity.

"I could have gone for bigger contracts in

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

“My dad was telling stories about all the legends who played the game, and I watched my big brother play. That's when I really started getting into baseball.”  
- Jair Jurrjens





“ I didn't really have a dream of playing Major League Baseball, but after my 10th year in Japan, I started to feel that I wanted to give it a shot over here. ”

- Takashi Saito

Japan, but I realized I might not have had many years left to play baseball, so I just wanted to give it a shot and I signed a minor league contract (with the Dodgers) over here,” he said.

Moylan, who pointed to, among others, Craig Shipley, Dave Nilsson and Graeme Lloyd as Aussie national heroes who made the majors, always held on to the major league dream. He remembered the empty feeling of not making it in his first try after signing as a 17-year-old with Minnesota.

“There were a lot of guys that everyone who played the game in Australia knew about,” said Moylan. “It was a little dis-

heartening when I started to read about guys I'd played with growing up that had made the big leagues, because I knew that I was as good as them, but I'd squandered whatever opportunity I might have had.”

Moylan, who pitched two years (1996, '97) for the Minnesota Twins' Gulf Coast League team, redeemed himself nearly a decade later, when he was rediscovered and signed by the Braves following his appearance for Australia in the inaugural World Baseball Classic.

The event, which has twice been won by Japan (though neither Saito nor Kawakami has appeared in it) has shown how the world has caught up to America, which has reached the semifinals only once.

Catching up to America required the ability to catch the games, and in that regard, the Braves offered a helping hand. TBS, which advertised the Braves as “America's Team,” helped internationalize the game by bringing games into international households.

“TBS used to be on TV every day, so everybody used to watch it a lot,” said former Braves catcher and current bullpen coach Eddie Perez, a native of



POLO DANA/ATLANTA BRAVES

Ciudad Ojeda, Venezuela.

“I used to watch [former Cincinnati Reds shortstop] Dave Concepcion, [former Oakland A's outfielder] Tony Armas, all those guys on TV. Watching on TV, seeing all the people in the stands, it became my dream.”

The roots established back then keep the Braves as one of the most popular MLB franchises worldwide. Now through the internet and the MLB Extra Innings TV package, the game is available everywhere.

“If you go to all of Latin America, you're going to find that,” said Almaraz. “In the Canary Islands, you see a lot of Major League Baseball shirts and caps. It's very evident, not the way it is in the States, of course. It's on a

## WE ARE THE WORLD

Currently, 18 countries outside the United States are represented in the Braves organization. Here is a breakdown of the nations and the number of players they provide.

|                    |     |
|--------------------|-----|
| Australia          | 4   |
| Canada             | 2   |
| Columbia           | 5   |
| Cuba               | 6   |
| Curacao            | 1   |
| Dominican Republic | 42  |
| El Salvador        | 1   |
| Honduras           | 1   |
| Japan              | 4   |
| Mexico             | 7   |
| Nicaragua          | 7   |
| Panama             | 16  |
| Puerto Rico        | 1   |
| South Africa       | 1   |
| South Korea        | 1   |
| Spain              | 2   |
| Taiwan             | 2   |
| Venezuela          | 27  |
| U.S.               | 136 |

“ It was a little disheartening when I started to read about guys I'd played with growing up that had made the big leagues, because I knew that I was as good as them, but I'd squandered whatever opportunity I might have had. ”

- Peter Moylan



POLO DANA/ATLANTA BRAVES



# MEETING DEMAND

**IN THE YOUNG,** every disappointment is magnified. Eddie Perez remembers one particular disappointment from his youth.

"My favorite team was the Cincinnati Reds, and I would have loved to have had a cap," he recalled. "It was hard to get, and I never got one. Now you can buy stuff on the internet, so people can have stuff. But my dream was to have a hat of the Cincinnati Reds, and I never got it."

Obviously, he got over the disappointment, and, now, thanks to the internet, Perez's son, and boys around the world can get just about any kind of baseball memorabilia of their favorite team by simply making a few clicks on line.

And do they ever.

Go anywhere in the world, and you're sure to find memorabilia of some major league team.

"Baseball is growing at a very

rapid pace in Spain right now. You go over there and see everybody wearing Braves shirts and hats," said Johnny Almaraz, the Braves' director of international scouting and operations.

The Braves have a definite toe-hold on the sale of items like caps and shirts worldwide, but the lion's share still belongs to the Yankees.

"The Yankees and the Braves are among the best," said Jair Jurrjens of the market in Curacao. "There's some L.A., too, but mostly Yankees and Braves."

"The Yankees were the team that everybody knows, for some reason," he recalled of his youth. "They're the team that has the most titles and they're pretty old, and that's why people know the Yankees everywhere."

— JON COOPER

much smaller scale, but it's growing."

"I think Major League Baseball has done a good job promoting the game," said Martinez, who Almaraz credits as being instrumental in the opening of the Braves Academy in Tenerife (in Spain's Canary Islands). "When you can take, for example, China, which participates in baseball in the Olympics, and it's a country that has so many people that have never played baseball. That interest is good for the game."

Baseball does some of its best promotional work by making sure countries have the opportunity to see their local heroes perform.

"You've got the Major League package back home," said Jurrjens. "When I'm pitching, when Andruw's playing, they try to put the games on TV."

"Now that there are a lot more Japanese players in the major leagues, it's as popular as it ever was," said Saito. "It's hard with the time difference, but my family does use the technology, such as the internet, to keep up with how I'm doing over here."

Surprisingly, even with such exposure, members of the current generation of major leaguers don't necessarily inspire

hero worship when they get home.

"I do get a 'hero's welcome' here and there, but not as much as you'd expect," said Saito with a laugh.

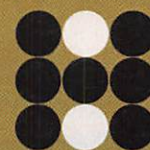
"People don't recognize me so much," agreed Jurrjens. "I'm really a down-to-earth guy. I'm not flashy, and people can't really recognize me."

In Australia, there's still a lot of room to grow the game. Moylan, who admitted to being a stats junkie even as a kid, says baseball ranks in his country's top 10 sports, but it's nowhere near the top. That offers him and other baseball heroes anonymity.

"It's funny, you wouldn't have even known that they were home by the way they were received," he said. "Graeme Lloyd pitched in a World Series (actually two, 1996 and '98 for the Yankees) and can walk around the streets of Australia like he's a milkman. It's an amazing thing."

"It's good!" he added. "It's nice to be able to just remove yourself from it a little bit and just go home and hang out with friends and family. It's really nice. I go home and just hang out with my friends, my kids, and not have a worry in the world."

You could say it's like living the dream.



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# BEHIND THE NUMBERS

## HEYWARD AND THE AGE 20 CLUB



Jason Heyward, who doesn't turn 21 until Aug. 9, will be a rarity if he can attain 500 plate appearances, because Ken Griffey Jr. is the only 20-year-old outfielder since 1975 to do so.

BY STEVE FALL

**WHILE THE FOCUS WILL BE** on how 20-year-old Jason Heyward performs this season, just playing regularly in the major leagues at his age would put him in a select group.

Only 19 outfielders have had 500 or more plate appearances in their age-20 season (determined by age on June 30). Ten of these players became Hall of Famers. The list includes Hank Aaron, who batted .280 with 13 home runs and 69 RBIs for the 1954 Milwaukee Braves. Al Kaline, Ted Williams, Mel Ott, Frank Robinson, Ty Cobb, George Davis, Mickey Mantle, Willie Mays and Roberto Clemente all made it to Cooperstown, as well.

Among this group's nine players yet to reach the Hall of Fame, Ken Griffey Jr. is certain to join them as soon as he becomes eligible. Vada Pinson, Sherry Magee, Cesar Cedeño, Claudell Washington, Jimmy Sheckard, Tony Conigliaro, Rick Manning and Buddy Bell round out the list. Combining the stats of all 19 outfielders, they averaged 17 home runs, 85 RBIs, a .298 batting average, and a .471 slugging percentage as 20-year-olds.

Out of these 19 players, the only one to have 500 plate appearances in his age-20 season since 1975 was Griffey in 1990. This shows how rare it is to see regular outfield duty at this age.

The Braves have had two 20-year-olds

besides Aaron surpass 500 plate appearances and play other positions. Hall of Fame third baseman Eddie Mathews hit 25 homers with 58 RBIs and a .242 batting average in 1952 – the Braves' final season in Boston. Infielder Sibby Sisti, who also saw regular action in his age-19 season, batted .259 with one homer and 45 RBIs as a 20-year-old for the 1941 Boston Braves.

The franchise has had other 20-year-olds make major contributions but fall short of 500 plate appearances. Andruw Jones had 18 homers, 70 RBIs, 20 stolen bases, and a .231 average in 1997. Third baseman Bob Horner joined the 1978 Braves in mid-June and won the National League Rookie of the Year with a sensational season (23 HR, 63 RBIs, and .266 BA in just 359 plate appearances). Joe Torre played catcher at age 20 for the 1961 Milwaukee Braves. He finished second in the Rookie of the Year balloting and had 10 home runs, 42 RBIs, and a .278 average.

Few pitchers have seen significant action for the Braves in their age-20 seasons. Steve Avery is the only one to make 20 or more starts since 1900. Avery struggled in that 1990 season, going 3-11 with a 5.64 ERA. Chet Nichols, 20 years old when he started and relieved for the 1951 Boston Braves, went 11-8 with a 2.88 ERA and two saves.

**JOHN SMOLTZ** appears to be retired, though he hasn't made it official yet. Four factors make his career stand out, not just in the era in which he pitched, but in all of major league history. First, he excelled in two roles – starter and closer – as only one other pitcher (Dennis Eckersley) can match. He delivered outstanding quality during a great hitter's era. Smoltz also showed longevity like few others. And finally, he ranked among the greatest post-season pitchers in history.

Examining statistics during the 25-year time frame from 1985 through 2009 demonstrates Smoltz's excellence. Only five pitchers topped his 3,084 strikeouts: Randy Johnson (4,875), Roger Clemens (4,546), Greg Maddux (3,371), Pedro Martinez (3,154) and Curt Schilling (3,116). Smoltz ranked 12th in wins (213) despite missing time with injuries and pitching in relief for four seasons. He also placed seventh in innings (3,473) and eighth in starts (481). Among pitchers with at least 200 starts during these 25 seasons, he ranked 11th in ERA (3.33) and 15th in strikeouts per nine innings (7.99).

Combining achievements places Smoltz in even more exclusive company. He joins five great pitchers who had 200 wins and 3,000 strikeouts from 1985 through 2009: Maddux, Clemens, Johnson, Martinez and Schilling. Extending the timeframe throughout history adds just 10 more names: Phil Niekro, Walter Johnson, Steve Carlton, Don Sutton, Nolan Ryan, Gaylord Perry, Tom Seaver, Bert Blyleven, Ferguson Jenkins, and Bob Gibson. Nine of those 10 became Hall of Famers, with only Blyleven not yet enshrined. And while Maddux and Niekro spent much of their career with the Braves, nobody except Smoltz reached 200 wins and 3,000 strikeouts for the club.

Smoltz is the only pitcher in history to combine at least 200 victories and 150 saves. He ended his career with 213 wins and 154 saves. Among pitchers with at least 150 career saves, Eckersley had the second-highest win total (197). Nobody else had more than 150 victories.

Smoltz basically pitched one additional season during post-season play. He worked 209 innings, going 15-4 with a 2.67 ERA and four saves. That ERA was far lower than his impressive regular season figure (3.33).



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# BIG SHOW

## California-Carolina League All-Star Game Returning To Myrtle Beach June 22

BY LYNN SELDON

**AS YOGI BERRA MIGHT SAY**, it's déjà vu all over again for Myrtle Beach, thanks to the return of the California-Carolina League All-Star Game on June 22 at BB&T Coastal Field. ChopTalk readers who lamented missing the 2008 game will get a unique second chance, and those lucky enough to be there in 2008 will surely be back for the second half of this unique All-Star doubleheader.

Winston-Salem's loss is most definitely a gain for Pelicans (and Braves) fans. When the planned 2009 opening of the new ballpark in Winston-Salem was delayed until this year, All-Star officials looked for an alternate Carolina League host so the Dash wouldn't have to open a new stadium and host the popular game in the same season.

"The 2008 game was a very impressive success for the Myrtle Beach Pelicans, the city of Myrtle Beach, and the Carolina League," said Scott Brown, general manager of the Pelicans. "It set a facility attendance record at BB&T Coastal Field with 6,599 fans, and it obviously laid the groundwork for the Carolina League to look to us for the 2010 installment."

Set for one of the premier tourist destinations in the nation, this showcase event makes for an ideal getaway for ChopTalk readers to see the best "Baby Braves" and other future stars. The city of Myrtle Beach understands what it means to host such an event at BB&T Coastal Field and through-



Carolina League players celebrate their 2008 victory (below) by hoisting the All-Star Game trophy at the Pelicans' home, BB&T Coastal Field that already sports banners (above) promoting the game's return.



out the city.

"Both the city and the Chamber are thrilled to have the opportunity to host the game again, and we've rolled out the red carpet to make sure it's as much or more of a success than two years ago," said Brad Dean, president and CEO of the Myrtle Beach Area Chamber of Commerce.

That red carpet ride for fans includes an All-Star Gala June 21, the day before the game, which will feature player introductions, food and drinks, and evening entertainment. In addition, there will be a full day's worth of events on game day, the 22nd, including autograph sessions, batting

practice, and a pre-game Home Run Derby.

Even though BB&T Coastal Field is only in its 12th season, it's constantly being updated, refined, and refreshed. Last season, the trade publication Baseball America named BB&T Coastal Field the best ballpark in the Carolina League. It's the only facility in the Carolina League with outfield bleachers, the only ballpark in America with a beach fronting the diamond, and it also boasts the largest video board in the Carolina League.

Not only was the 2008 game a major success off the field with a variety of activities, but it was extremely exciting on the field, too.



Six hometown Pelicans were named to their league's showcase squad, and Myrtle Beach's Ernesto Mejia won the Home Run Derby crown. Later that night, the Carolina League broke an eighth inning 1-1 tie and took home a 3-1 victory - with Potomac's Edgardo Baez claiming game MVP honors with his tie-breaking home run in the eighth.

Two players who participated in that game are already making their mark in the majors. Most notably, San Francisco third baseman "Kung Fu Panda" Pablo Sandoval, who hit 25 homers for the Giants last year, actually lost to Mejia in the Derby finals and took part in the game for the California League as a representative of the San Jose Giants.

On the Carolina League side, recent Sports Illustrated cover boy Matt Wieters, then of the Frederick Keys and now the Baltimore Orioles' catcher, posted a 1-for-2 night with an RBI.

ChopTalk readers who head to the Myrtle Beach for an all-star getaway will surely wonder when they'll be seeing one or more Pelicans players in a Braves uniform. Either way, this is an all-star game that's another guaranteed hit for Myrtle Beach.

Visit [visitmyrtlebeach.com](http://visitmyrtlebeach.com) and [myrtlebeachpelicans.com](http://myrtlebeachpelicans.com) for more information.



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## WAGNER'S TIPS HELPING KIMBREL PREPARE FOR BIG LEAGUE CALLUP

**JASON HEYWARD** was the talk of the major leagues as one of the top rookies in spring training and the early part of the regular season, and deservedly so. However, the rookie right-fielder was not the only young player to make a positive impression at ESPN Wide World of Sports. Reliever Craig Kimbrel showed Bobby Cox and pitching coach Roger McDowell that his right arm is on the verge of contributing in Atlanta should the Braves need assistance in the bullpen.

"It was exciting and a lot of fun," said Kimbrel, who did not allow an earned run in nine innings during spring training. "I also learned a lot by watching Billy Wagner and Scott Proctor and asking them questions. They were real helpful, and I was able to use what they showed me."

At the suggestion of Wagner, Kimbrel is no longer throwing from the windup. With his role centered on the late innings, during which there are oftentimes runners on base, the righthander is now working exclusively from the stretch in order to help maintain his mechanics.

"It's helping me repeat my delivery a lot more consistently," Kimbrel said. "Wagner noticed the difference in how I threw the ball. We're about the same size, and when you have a guy who's going to be in the Hall of Fame giving you advice, the smart thing to do is to pay attention and give it a try."

Kimbrel pitched at three levels in the Atlanta organization immediately after being drafted in the third round in 2008. He struggled with his command early in the 2009 season before making the climb from Class-A Rome in April to Triple-A Gwinnett at the end of the season. This spring, Kimbrel issued

eight walks but struck out 14 batters and surrendered only three hits in nine appearances.

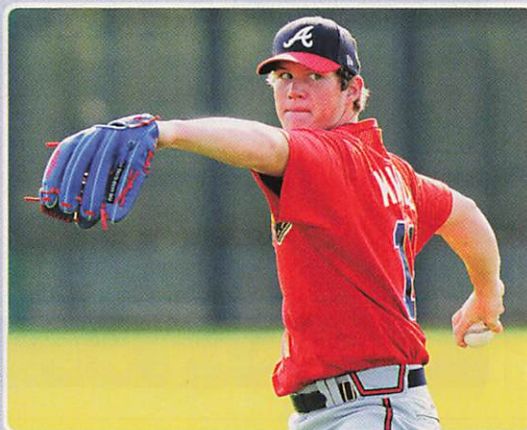
"I've approached the season determined not to worry about my command," Kimbrel said. "When I miss, I'm around the zone. It's not like I'm throwing it against the backstop. I know I'm going to walk a guy or two, here and there. I can't worry about walking a guy. I just have to pitch."

While the Braves envision Kimbrel as a possible closer down the road, the organization is having him pitch more than one-inning stints with Gwinnett. By pitching two and even three innings on occasion, he will have the opportunity to work on all of his pitches as well as a variety of game situations. As a result, Kimbrel is throwing his curveball and changeup more often with the G-Braves in order to expand the arsenal he will bring to the majors.

One moment Kimbrel will not forget from spring training came late in a game against Philadelphia. The reliever had the formidable challenge of facing All-Stars Chase Utley and Ryan Howard back-to-back in the Phillies' lineup and

emerged unscathed. Now that he has gotten his feet wet, Kimbrel is looking forward to a rematch with more on the line than a mid-March exhibition game.

"I'd love to get up (to Atlanta) by the end of the year and face those same guys," said Kimbrel, who had a save and did not allow a run in his first two outings at Triple-A this season. "Being here in Gwinnett, it's so close (to Turner Field), but it's also so far away. I know I have work to do before I'm ready to go there, but I do feel I'm getting closer all of the time."



Craig Kimbrel, who didn't allow a run in nine innings of work in spring training (14 strikeouts), opened the season at Gwinnett but is building a strong case for promotion to the majors.

## GWINNETT TRIPLE A

**PITCHER Todd Redmond** was removed from the 40-man roster to make room for **Jason Heyward** and then cleared waivers, but the righthander did not let that affect his focus. The G-Braves' most consistent pitcher in 2009, Redmond picked up where he left off by allowing only one run on three hits over seven innings in his first start, on April 10, against Charlotte. With that outing,

Redmond continued the streak in which he has not lost a decision since June 19...

Outfielder **Mitch Jones** started the season 0-for-11 with five strikeouts before posting a single in his final at-bat of the initial four-game series. Jones led the Triple-A level last year with 35 home runs at Albuquerque...

The Braves claimed **Cristhian Martinez** off waivers from the Marlins on April 8 and assigned the right-handed reliever to Gwinnett. The 28-year-old Martinez had a

5.13 ERA in 26 1/3 innings of work at the major league level in 2009. Ironically, Martinez never pitched at the Triple-A level while working his way up the Florida farm system...

Some observers thought catcher **Clint Sammons** might have a permanent spot on the Atlanta roster by this point in his career, but the former Georgia standout is not disappointed about being blocked by the presence of Brian McCann and David Ross. He also realizes that many big league receivers



do not become established until their late 20s. "Having been up and down the last few years, I've learned a lot about how guys prepare to do their job," Sammons said. "I try to carry that back down here and be as professional as I can be. Being in spring training and having been in Atlanta, I'm confident that things will work out when I get back up there, because I'll feel much more comfortable based on my experience."...

First baseman **Freddie Freeman** worked through a couple of injuries last season that limited his power production and his ability to make hard and consistent contact. Those ailments are in the past, which enabled the former second-round draft pick to make yet another strong impression in big league camp. "He battled through some things with his hand and his back, but he's looked like the Freddie Freeman of two years ago," said **Kurt Kemp**, Atlanta's director of player development...

After battling for a relief job with Atlanta during spring training and earning the victory on Opening Night by allowing one run in two innings out of the bullpen, **Jonny Venters** worked 4 2/3 shutout innings in his first start, against Durham, on April 12.



## MISSISSIPPI DOUBLE A

**MIKE MINOR** is expected to remain on the fast track to Atlanta, if for no other reason than the fact that the Braves' major league club does not have a lefthander in its starting rotation. There is only one southpaw (Venters) starting at Gwinnett, which makes Minor, the team's first-round draft pick in 2009 out of Vanderbilt, a coveted commodity. Minor had an excellent camp with the M-Braves during spring training and was the team's Opening Night starter, when he suffered the loss while allowing four earned runs and six hits in five innings. "He throws a lot harder than I thought he would, based on everything I heard and read," said Mississippi manager **Phillip Wellman**, referring to Minor's 90-mph fastball. "His fastball is probably his best pitch." Minor has outstanding overall command of all his pitches, which includes a changeup, curveball and slider...

**Cody Johnson** has his eye on the M-Braves' single-season home run mark of 19, established by **Matt Esquivel** in 2007. Johnson paced the Atlanta organization with 32 homers last year and hit the team's first homer of 2010 with a three-run shot to right field in the season opener. At the same time, Johnson needs to focus on making

solid contact by managing the strike zone and hitting to the opposite field more consistently instead of trying to go deep with every swing. The Braves also want Johnson to improve the accuracy of his throws from the outfield while upgrading the routes he takes on flyballs...

**Erik Cordier** made his Double-A debut on April 9 and allowed two hits and one earned run in four innings. Cordier's career was slowed early by a knee injury in 2005 and Tommy John surgery in 2006. Inconsistent mechanics have affected his command, but M-Braves pitching coach **Marty Reed** believes Cordier has the tools to pitch in the big leagues. "He needs to attack with the weapons he has, which are very good," Reed said, referring to Cordier's 90-94 mph fastball and excellent changeup. "If he does that, he'll be fine."...

The M-Braves did not make it through the first series of the season without having to make some roster moves. Pitcher **Brett Butts** was placed on the disabled list April 10 after working out of the bullpen. Butts' roster spot was taken by pitcher **Tim Gustafson**, who was sent down from Gwinnett...

Second baseman **Juan Gonzalez** went on the disabled list April 11 after pulling a hamstring the previous night. Shortstop **Randy Gress** filled the void after being promoted from Myrtle Beach...

Wellman entered the season with 799 career wins as a manager but had to wait a while for number 800. The M-Braves dropped their first four games to Tennessee before defeating the Smokies, 5-4, in 10 innings on April 12. **Alex Romero** doubled to open the extra inning and then scored on **Willie Cabrera's** single...

Atlanta signed Romero, an outfielder, just prior to the start of the regular season. He was released earlier in the spring by Houston. Romero hit .348 for Arizona's Triple-A team in Reno in 2009 but batted .248 in 145 trips to the plate last year in the major leagues...

The M-Braves are a veteran club, which made the team's 35 strikeouts in its first three games somewhat disconcerting. The first seven batters and 10 of the first 12 struck out in the first four innings of the season opener against Tennessee on April 8.



## MYRTLE BEACH ADVANCED A

**RANDALL DELGADO** continues his emergence as one of the top pitching prospects in baseball. After a strong final two months of the 2009 season, the righthander mixed his

92-94 mph fastball, sweeping curveball and excellent changeup over five innings in Myrtle Beach's 4-1 win over Wilmington on April 8. ...

Third baseman **Shayne Moody** hit a two-run, walk-off homer over the left field deck to give Myrtle Beach a 10-9 triumph over the Blue Rocks on April 9...

**Juan Abreu** was assigned to Myrtle Beach after the hard-throwing righthander was removed from the 40-man roster and cleared waivers near the end of spring training...

The Pelicans attracted 16,215 fans to open the season, a total that represents the most ever to attend a season-opening four-game series in Myrtle Beach.



## ROME CLASS A

**THE R-BRAVES** have traditionally struggled out of the gate due to having one of the youngest rosters, year in and year out, in the South Atlantic League. That trend was not apparent during the first few days of the season when Rome swept a season-opening four-game series at Kannapolis and then took the first game at Greenville before dropping a 3-1 decision on April 13...

Manager **Randy Ingle's** team has incredible speed, with four players - **Kyle Rose**, **L.V. Ware**, **Cory Harrilchak** and **Mycal Jones** - combining to steal 88 bases in 102 attempts in 2009...

Rose, Rome's centerfielder, opened the season with a five-game hitting streak, during which he was 12-for-22 (.545). Rose spent the spring learning to switch-hit in order for the fastest player in the farm system to take full advantage of his speed... Catcher **Christian Bethancourt** made an impressive splash into the South Atlantic League. The Panamanian hit a three-run homer in his debut, on April 9, and went 4-for-4 with two RBIs two days later. Considered to be the top catching prospect in the organization, Bethancourt had eight hits in his first 15 at-bats...

Rome is also loaded with pitching, with **Julio Teheran** and **Arodys Vizcaino** considered two of the top pitching prospects in the game. Teheran worked six shutout innings to earn the win in his debut this season, limiting Kannapolis to two hits and one walk while striking out seven. Rounding out the Rome rotation is **David Hale**, a third-round pick in 2009 out of Princeton, **Brett Oberholtzer**, who threw four shutout innings in his first start, and **Chris Masters**, who had 10 strikeouts and





## I'M LEARNING VALUE OF PITCHING AHEAD

**IF YOU ASKED ME** a couple of years ago if I would be here, I probably would have said no. I admit I'm excited. I had a good spring training, and I'm happy that I was able to make some good impressions on some people. That gave me a lot of confidence heading into the season.

I felt like I learned a lot in spring training. Getting the chance to see the veteran guys and how they carry themselves while getting their work was beneficial. I watched to see how they dressed and what they did between starts and how bullpen guys get their work between outings. I tried to take in as much as I could. I asked a few of them some questions, and they were all very helpful. Being in that atmosphere, where the game is played at the highest level, was awesome.

Last season was a good year for me. Working with (Mississippi pitching coach) Marty Reed was great, and he really helped me start throwing strikes consistently, which is a big key for me, as well as any other pitcher. I've always had a problem throwing a lot of strikes, but he helped me with some mechanical things that improved my consistency.

I found out again last year after I came up to Gwinnett that you can't pitch effectively if you're always behind in the count. The Triple-A hitters can pick up on what a pitcher is doing, especially if he isn't throwing quality pitches early in an at-bat. When they saw that, they knew

when I was going to throw my fastball, and they didn't miss it. At this level and in the big leagues, you have to throw strikes and mix things up, or the hitters will pick up on a pattern and they'll punish you.

I had a rough time for about three years earlier in my career. I underwent Tommy John surgery (2006), and it got to the point where I really didn't know if I was going to be able to pitch again. It seemed like every time I'd finally get back to pitching, something else would happen. It was really draining from a mental standpoint.

That's why last season was so important for me to finish the year healthy, which was my main goal prior to the season.

Ironically, when I first came back from the surgery (2007), I felt great. I threw 80 innings at Myrtle Beach that year before I had a setback. After that, the mental part of the game started to wear me down. Finally in 2008, after missing the first three months of the season, I threw well at Myrtle and then I pitched well during my first time in Double-A (Mississippi).

After that I pitched in Hawaii during the off-season and really felt my elbow was right. That gave me a lot of confidence for the first time in a long time.

My breaking ball is still not back to where it was before the surgery. I don't know if that's a mental thing or not. Right now I'm working mostly on being consistent with my sinker, which I believe is my best pitch. That's the key for me, maintaining control of my sinker down in the zone and staying ahead in the count.

It doesn't matter to me whether I start or relieve. I like both roles. When you're a starter, you have your routine. Coming out of the bullpen for an inning, you can really let it rip, which is something I like to do.

### EDITOR'S NOTE

Jonny Venters, 25, was drafted in the 30th round by the Braves in 2003 and signed the following May after pitching at Indian River (Fla.) Community College. A 6-foot-3, 195-pound lefthander, he led all Braves minor leaguers with 156 2/3 innings last season and was named a mid-season Southern League All-Star before a June promotion to Triple-A Gwinnett, where he opened 2010.

allowed only two unearned runs and two hits in six innings on April 13...

**Cory Rasmus**, who missed all of the 2008 season and most of 2007 with injuries, earned a save and a win in his first two relief outings at the Class-A level...

First baseman **Riann Spanjer-Furstenburg** was placed on the disabled list after being hit by a pitch and suffering a broken bone in his left hand at Greenville on April 12. Spanjer-Furstenburg, who had a .267 batting average with four RBIs in the team's first five games, was replaced on the roster by first baseman **Alberto Odreman**, who was promoted from extended spring training.



### ORGANIZATIONAL

\* Baseball America rated the Braves as the ninth-best among the 30 major league organizations in terms of talent in its minor league system.

\* The end of the spring training brought with it the release of several players, including pitchers **Patrick Currin**, **Rudy Darrow**, **Mike Mehlich** and **Kevin Gunderson**, catcher **J.R. House**, first baseman **Greg Creek**, second baseman **Michael Fisher** and outfielders **C.J. Lee**, **Antoan Richardson** and **Stephen Shults**. Earlier in camp, the Braves waived pitchers **Cody Railsback**, **Eric Barrett**, **Derick Himpls** and **Clayton McMillan**.

\* **Van Pope** did not open the season with a full-season club but continued to work on his pitching skills in extended spring training.

\* Right-handed reliever **Luis Valdez** opened the season on the restricted list after he had difficulty getting a visa to leave the Dominican Republic.

\* Pitcher **Deunte Heath** was released after he was arrested for allegedly soliciting for prostitution in a reported undercover sting operation in Kissimmee, Fla., during spring training.

\* The Braves turned down the opportunity to reacquire pitcher **Edgar Osuna** from the Kansas City Royals near the end of spring training. Osuna was taken by the Royals from Atlanta last December in the Rule 5 draft.

\* The Braves signed 18-year-old catcher **Victor Velazquez** at their European academy in Tenerife. He's the fifth player signed at the facility, which has a new office in the Maritim Hotel.



# OPENING DAY ROSTERS



**WINNETT**  
TRIPLE A

## PITCHERS

MICHAEL DUNN  
CORY GEARRIN  
MARIANO GOMEZ  
TIM GUSTAFSON  
CRAIG KIMBREL  
JEFF LYMAN  
VLADIMIR NUNEZ (DL)  
JAMES PARR  
SCOTT PROCTOR  
TODD REDMOND  
CHRIS RESOP  
RYNE REYNOSO  
JONNY VENTERS

## CATCHERS

J.C. BOSCAN  
CLINT SAMMONS

## INFIELDERS

BARBARO CANIZARES  
FREDDIE FREEMAN  
BRANDON HICKS  
J.C. HOLT  
JOE THURSTON  
WES TIMMONS

## OUTFIELDERS

GREGOR BLANCO  
BRENT CLEVLEN  
MITCH JONES  
MATT YOUNG



**MISSISSIPPI**  
DOUBLE A

## PITCHERS

BRANDON BEACHY  
MICHAEL BROADWAY  
BRETT BUTTS  
KYLE COFIELD  
ERIK CORDIER  
DUSTIN EVANS  
LEE HYDE  
STEPHEN MAREK  
MIKE MINOR  
THOMAS PALICA  
RICHARD SULLIVAN  
JACOB THOMPSON

## CATCHERS

CHRIS ANDERSON  
BENJI JOHNSON  
ORLANDO MARCADO

## INFIELDERS

LUIS BOLIVAR  
ERIC DUNCAN  
MAURO GOMEZ  
JUAN GONZALEZ  
TRAVIS JONES  
DONELL LINARES

## OUTFIELDERS

WILLIE CABRERA  
CODY JOHNSON  
CONCEPCION RODRIGUEZ  
ALEXPOMERO



**MYRTLE BEACH**  
ADVANCED A

## PITCHERS

JUAN ABREU  
YELIAR CASTRO  
JAYE CHAPMAN  
MATT CRIM  
RANDALL DELGADO  
DAVID FRANCIS  
J.J. HOOVER  
JOSE ORTEGANO  
ANGELO PAULINO  
BENINO PRUNEDA  
CHAD RODGERS  
COLE ROHRBOUGH  
ZEKE SPRUILL

## CATCHERS

MATT KENNELLY  
JESUS SUCRE

## INFIELDERS

GERARDO AVILA  
JOEL CAMPUSANO  
RANDY GRESS  
SHAYNE MOODY  
GERALDO RODRIGUEZ  
AMADEO ZAZUETA

## OUTFIELDERS

COLE MILES  
ADAM MILLIGAN  
JAHDIEL SANTAMARIA  
CHRIS SHEHAN



**ROME**  
CLASS A

## PITCHERS

LUIS AVILAN  
THOMAS BERRYHILL  
PAUL CLEMENS  
DIMASTER DELGADO (DL)  
DAVID HALE  
TYRELLE HARRIS  
STEVEN KENT (DL)  
ROBINSON LOPEZ  
CHRIS MASTERS  
BRETT OBERHOLTZER  
CORY RASMUS  
JULIO SURINACH  
JULIO TEHERAN  
ARODYS VIZCAINO  
RYAN WEBER

## CATCHERS

CHRISTIAN BETHANCOURT  
OSMAN MARVAL  
BRAEDEN SCHLEHUBER

## INFIELDERS

RYAN BARBA  
MYCAL JONES  
JORDAN KREKE  
SAMUEL SIME (DL)  
RIAAAN SPANJER-FURSTENBURG  
MATT WEAVER

## OUTFIELDERS

RAMON FLORES  
CORY HARRILCHAK  
KYLE ROSE  
L.V. WARE

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- Casino Trips
- Birthday Parties



# APRIL / MAY

HOME

AWAY

ALL GAMES ON  
ROCK 100.5,  
680 THE FAN,  
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**ROCK 100.5**  
ATLANTA'S ROCK STATION  
**680**  
The Fan

FSS FS SOUTH

PTV Peachtree TV

SS >> SPORTSOUTH

FOX FOX

ESPN ESPN

2010 SCHEDULE

| SUNDAY                   | MONDAY                | TUESDAY               | WEDNESDAY             | THURSDAY             | FRIDAY                | SATURDAY             |
|--------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|
| 25 8:00<br>NYM<br>ESPN   | 26 8:00<br>STL<br>PTV | 27 8:00<br>STL<br>PTV | 28 8:00<br>STL<br>PTV | 29 1:30<br>STL<br>SS | 30 7:30<br>HOU<br>SS  | 1 3:00<br>HOU<br>FOX |
| 2 1:30<br>HOU<br>FSS     | 3                     | 4 7:00<br>WAS<br>SS   | 5 7:00<br>WAS<br>SS   | 6 7:00<br>WAS<br>SS  | 7 7:00<br>PHI<br>SS   | 8 3:00<br>PHI<br>FOX |
| 9 1:30<br>PHI<br>FSS/TBS | 10 8:00<br>MIL<br>SS  | 11 8:00<br>MIL<br>SS  | 12 1:00<br>MIL<br>SS  | 13                   | 14 7:30<br>ARI<br>PTV | 15 7:00<br>ARI<br>SS |
| 16 1:30<br>ARI<br>FSS    | 17 7:00<br>NYM<br>PTV | 18 7:00<br>NYM<br>PTV | 19 7:00<br>CIN<br>PTV | 20 1:00<br>CIN<br>SS | 21 7:00<br>PIT<br>SS  | 22 7:00<br>PIT       |
| 23 1:30<br>PIT<br>FSS    | 24                    | 25 7:00<br>FLA<br>SS  | 26 7:00<br>FLA<br>SS  | 27 7:00<br>FLA<br>SS | 28 7:30<br>PIT<br>PTV | 29 7:00<br>PIT<br>SS |
| 30 1:30<br>PIT<br>FSS    | 31 1:00<br>PHI<br>SS  |                       |                       |                      |                       |                      |

## JUNE

| SUNDAY                | MONDAY                | TUESDAY                   | WEDNESDAY                | THURSDAY                | FRIDAY                | SATURDAY             |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|
|                       |                       | 1 7:00<br>PHI<br>PTV/ESPN | 2 1:00<br>PHI<br>SS      | 3 10:00<br>LA<br>SS     | 4 10:00<br>LA<br>SS   | 5 10:00<br>LA<br>SS  |
| 6 1:30<br>LA<br>FSS   | 7 9:30<br>ARI<br>SS   | 8 9:30<br>ARI<br>SS       | 9 9:30<br>ARI<br>SS      | 10 3:30<br>ARI<br>SS    | 11 8:00<br>MIN<br>SS  | 12 7:00<br>MIN<br>SS |
| 13 2:00<br>MIN<br>FSS | 14                    | 15 7:00<br>TAM<br>PTV     | 16 7:00<br>TAM<br>PTV    | 17 7:00<br>TAM<br>PTV   | 18 7:30<br>KC<br>PTV  | 19 7:00<br>KC<br>SS  |
| 20 1:30<br>KC<br>FSS  | 21                    | 22 8:00<br>CHI AL<br>PTV  | 23 8:00<br>CHI AL<br>PTV | 24 2:00<br>CHI AL<br>SS | 25 7:30<br>DET<br>PTV | 26 4:00<br>DET<br>SS |
| 27 1:30<br>DET<br>FSS | 28 7:00<br>WAS<br>PTV | 29 7:00<br>WAS<br>PTV     | 30 7:00<br>WAS<br>SS     |                         |                       |                      |

## JULY

| SUNDAY                | MONDAY               | TUESDAY                        | WEDNESDAY            | THURSDAY              | FRIDAY                | SATURDAY              |
|-----------------------|----------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
|                       |                      |                                |                      | 1                     | 2 7:30<br>FLA<br>PTV  | 3 4:00<br>FLA<br>FOX  |
| 4 5:00<br>FLA<br>FSS  | 5 7:00<br>PHI<br>PTV | 6 7:00<br>PHI<br>PTV           | 7 7:00<br>PHI<br>PTV | 8                     | 9 7:00<br>NYM<br>SS   | 10 4:00<br>NYM<br>FOX |
| 11 1:00<br>NYM<br>FSS | 12                   | 13 ALL-STAR<br>GAME<br>ANAHEIM | 14                   | 15 7:00<br>MIL<br>PTV | 16 7:30<br>MIL<br>PTV | 17 7:00<br>MIL<br>SS  |
| 18 1:30<br>MIL<br>FSS | 19                   | 20 7:00<br>SD<br>PTV           | 21 7:00<br>SD<br>PTV | 22 1:00<br>SD<br>SS   | 23 7:00<br>FLA<br>SS  | 24 7:00<br>FLA<br>SS  |
| 25 1:00<br>FLA<br>FSS | 26                   | 27 7:00<br>WAS<br>SS           | 28 7:00<br>WAS<br>SS | 29 12:30<br>WAS<br>SS | 30 7:00<br>CIN<br>SS  | 31 7:00<br>CIN<br>SS  |



# AUGUST

| SUNDAY                | MONDAY                | TUESDAY               | WEDNESDAY            | THURSDAY             | FRIDAY               | SATURDAY              |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|
| 1 1:00<br>CIN<br>FSS  | 2 7:00<br>NYM<br>ESPN | 3 7:00<br>NYM<br>PTV  | 4 7:00<br>NYM<br>PTV | 5 7:00<br>SF<br>PTV  | 6 7:30<br>SF<br>PTV  | 7 4:00<br>SF<br>FOX   |
| 8 1:30<br>SF<br>FSS   | 9 8:00<br>HOU<br>SS   | 10 8:00<br>HOU<br>SS  | 11 2:00<br>HOU<br>SS | 12                   | 13 7:30<br>LA<br>PTV | 14 7:00<br>LA<br>PTV  |
| 15 1:30<br>LA<br>FSS  | 16 7:00<br>LA<br>PTV  | 17 7:00<br>WAS<br>SS  | 18 7:00<br>WAS<br>SS | 19 1:00<br>WAS<br>SS | 20 2:00<br>CHC<br>SS | 21 4:00<br>CHC<br>FOX |
| 22<br>CHC<br>FSS      | 23 8:30<br>COL<br>SS  | 24 8:30<br>COL<br>SS  | 25 3:00<br>COL<br>SS | 26                   | 27 7:30<br>FLA<br>SS | 28 4:00<br>FLA<br>FOX |
| 29 1:30<br>FLA<br>FSS | 30 7:00<br>NYM<br>PTV | 31 7:00<br>NYM<br>PTV |                      |                      |                      |                       |

# SEPT./OCT.

| SUNDAY                | MONDAY               | TUESDAY              | WEDNESDAY                 | THURSDAY             | FRIDAY                | SATURDAY              |
|-----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|---------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
|                       |                      |                      | 1 7:00<br>NYM<br>PTV/ESPN | 2 7:00<br>NYM<br>PTV | 3 7:00<br>FLA<br>SS   | 4 7:00<br>FLA<br>SS   |
| 5 1:00<br>FLA<br>FSS  | 6 1:30<br>PIT<br>SS  | 7 7:00<br>PIT<br>SS  | 8 7:00<br>PIT<br>SS       | 9 7:00<br>STL<br>PTV | 10 7:30<br>STL<br>PTV | 11 4:00<br>STL<br>FOX |
| 12 1:30<br>STL<br>FSS | 13 7:00<br>WAS<br>SS | 14 7:00<br>WAS<br>SS | 15 12:00<br>WAS<br>SS     | 16                   | 17 7:00<br>NYM<br>SS  | 18 4:00<br>NYM<br>FOX |
| 19 1:00<br>NYM<br>FSS | 20 7:00<br>PHI<br>SS | 21 7:00<br>PHI<br>SS | 22 7:00<br>PHI<br>SS      | 23                   | 24 7:00<br>WAS<br>SS  | 25 1:00<br>WAS<br>SS  |
| 26 1:30<br>WAS<br>FSS | 27 7:00<br>FLA<br>SS | 28 7:00<br>FLA<br>SS | 29 4:30<br>FLA<br>SS      | 30                   | 1 7:30<br>PHI<br>SS   | 2 7:00<br>PHI<br>SS   |
| 3 1:30<br>PHI<br>FSS  |                      |                      |                           |                      |                       |                       |

2010 SCHEDULE

## GAME BY GAME

| GAME | DATE | OPP | H/A | W-L | SCORE    | W/L PITCHER    | ATL HRs                 | REC | POS | GB |
|------|------|-----|-----|-----|----------|----------------|-------------------------|-----|-----|----|
| 1    | 4/5  | CHC | H   | W   | 16-5     | Lowe (1-0)     | Heyward (1), McCann (1) | 1-0 | T-1 | —  |
| 2    | 4/7  | CHC | H   | W   | 3-2      | Moylan (1-0)   | Jones (1)               | 2-0 | T-1 | —  |
| 3    | 4/8  | CHC | H   | L   | 0-2      | Hanson (0-1)   | —                       | 2-1 | T-1 | —  |
| 4    | 4/9  | SF  | A   | L   | 4-5 (13) | Medlen (0-1)   | —                       | 2-2 | 3   | -1 |
| 5    | 4/10 | SF  | A   | W   | 7-2      | Lowe (2-0)     | Heyward (2)             | 3-2 | 2   | -1 |
| 6    | 4/11 | SF  | A   | L   | 3-6      | Kawakami (0-1) | McCann (2), Heyward (3) | 3-3 | 3   | -2 |
| 7    | 4/12 | SD  | A   | L   | 2-17     | Jurrjens (0-1) | —                       | 3-4 | 3   | -3 |
| 8    | 4/14 | SD  | A   | W   | 6-1      | Hanson (1-1)   | Glaus (1)               | 4-4 | 3   | -3 |
| 9    | 4/15 | SD  | A   | W   | 6-2      | Hudson (1-0)   | Prado (1)               | 5-4 | T-2 | -2 |



# MLB

TO PURCHASE TICKETS OR FOR TICKET INFORMATION,  
CALL (404) 577-9100 OR VISIT [braves.com](http://braves.com)

## INDIVIDUAL GAME TICKETS

Single game tickets are available at [braves.com/tickets](http://braves.com/tickets), the Braves box office at Turner Field, by calling 1-800-745-3000, and at all TicketMaster outlets.

| LOCATION                    | PRICE | PREMIUM* |
|-----------------------------|-------|----------|
| Skyline#                    | \$1   | \$1      |
| Upper Pavilion              | \$6   | \$8      |
| Upper Reserved              | \$8   | \$12     |
| Upper Box                   | \$12  | \$16     |
| Terrace Reserved            | \$24  | \$28     |
| Field/Terrace Pavilion      | \$24  | \$28     |
| Field Reserved              | \$28  | \$32     |
| Golden Moon Casino Pavilion | \$28  | \$32     |
| Terrace Level               | \$36  | \$40     |
| Field Level                 | \$38  | \$42     |
| Golden Moon Casino Level    | \$44  | \$48     |
| Dugout Level                | \$64  | \$68     |
| Henry Aaron Seats           | \$74  | \$78     |

#Available only at Turner Field two and a half hours before games.

\*Premium games include July 4 and all Friday and Saturday games.

## 2-FOR-1 TICKETS

- \* **Mondays** 2 Golden Moon Casino Pavilion for \$28
- \* **Tuesdays** 2 Upper Reserved for \$8
- \* **Wednesdays** 2 Field/Terrace Pavilion for \$24
- \* Fans with college or military ID or a AAA card also can purchase two Upper Box tickets for the price of one.

## \$1 TICKETS

\* **\$1 SkyLine Seats** - Available two and a half hours before every game at the Turner Field Ticket Office.

\* **Buck Belue Buck Night** - \$1 Tickets for all Upper Reserved Seats On Following Mondays (all 7:10 p.m.): May 17 vs. Mets, June 28 vs. Nationals, Aug. 2 vs. Mets, Aug. 16 vs. Dodgers, Aug. 30 vs. Mets, Sept. 13 vs. Nationals, Sept. 27 vs. Marlins.

## FAMILY VALUE PLAN

Get 4 tickets, 4 hotdogs, 4 Cokes, a parking pass, a program and \$5 Chevron gift card for as low as \$59 (upper box seats). Upgrade to Outfield Pavilion for \$79 (total) or Golden Moon Casino Pavilion for \$99 (total).

## SEASON TICKET PLANS

The following ticket plans are on sale. For more information, visit [braves.com](http://braves.com) or call (404) 577-9100 to inquire about pro-rated options.

### TYPE

\***Added Value:** Save 20 percent by adding \$10 to your game ticket, which is stored on the bar code for each game, for \$8. The added value can be used at any concession stand. \$10 is already included in the Henry Aaron and Club Level areas.

\***755 Club:** A 755 Club membership is automatically included in Henry Aaron, Club Level and Club Pavilion areas.

\***2-For-1:** 2-For-1 Season Tickets are available in rows 11 and higher in the Upper Box.

## FULL SEASON (83 Games)

| Level             | *Type                | Price   |
|-------------------|----------------------|---------|
| Henry Aaron Seats | Added Value/755 Club | \$5,146 |
| Dugout            | Regular              | \$4,482 |
| Terrace           | Regular              | \$2,490 |
| Field             | Regular              | \$2,822 |
| Club              | Added Value/755 Club | \$3,154 |
| Outfield Pavilion | Regular              | \$1,162 |
| Upper Box         | 2-For-1              | \$415   |
| Terrace Reserved  | Regular              | \$996   |
| Field Reserved    | Regular              | \$1,162 |
| Club Pavilion     | 755 Club             | \$1,162 |
| Upper Pavilion    | Regular              | \$249   |

## HALF SEASON (42 Games+)

| Level             | *Type                | Price   |
|-------------------|----------------------|---------|
| Field             | Regular              | \$1,512 |
| Club              | Added Value/755 Club | \$1,764 |
| Outfield Pavilion | Regular              | \$756   |
| Upper Box         | Regular              | \$462   |

## WEEKENDS (30 Games+)

| Level     | *Type                | Price   |
|-----------|----------------------|---------|
| Field     | Regular              | \$1,080 |
| Club      | Added Value/755 Club | \$1,260 |
| Outfield  | Regular              | \$540   |
| Upper Box | Regular              | \$330   |



## 20-GAMES

### DALE MURPHY PLAN

(Variety of Tuesday games and all Fridays)

| Level | *Type                | Price |
|-------|----------------------|-------|
| Field | Regular              | \$720 |
| Club  | Added Value/755 Club | \$840 |

### BOBBY COX PLAN

(Variety of Wednesday games and all Saturdays)

| Level           | *Type                | Price |
|-----------------|----------------------|-------|
| Field           | Regular              | \$720 |
| Field-Early Cox | Adult                | \$640 |
| Club            | Added Value/755 Club | \$840 |

### PHIL NIEKRO PLAN

(Variety of Thursdays and all Sundays)

| Level | *Type                | Price |
|-------|----------------------|-------|
| Field | Regular              | \$720 |
| Club  | Added Value/755 Club | \$840 |

### WARREN SPAHN PLAN

(Only weekday games and all day games)

| Level | *Type                | Price |
|-------|----------------------|-------|
| Field | Regular              | \$720 |
| Club  | Added Value/755 Club | \$840 |

## FLEX PLANS

\* Minimum of 10 games for as low as \$110 per seat.

\* Change dates if your plans change.

| Section       | Gate Price | Flex Price |
|---------------|------------|------------|
| Golden Moon   | \$44/48    | \$42       |
| Field Level   | \$38/42    | \$37       |
| Terrace       | \$36/40    | \$35       |
| Field/Terrace | \$24/28    | \$22       |
| Pavilion      |            |            |
| Upper Box     | \$12/16    | \$11       |

## PRIVATE SUITES

Located on the Golden Moon Casino Level. Climate controlled suite plus access to outside balcony seating. TVs, refrigerator, icemaker, wet bar and telephone. Available from two hours before the game until the last pitch. Call (404) 577-9100.

## BOBBY COX 6-GAME PLAN

May 15 vs. Diamondbacks,  
June 19 vs. Kansas City Royals,  
July 3 vs. Marlins,  
Aug. 6 vs. Giants  
Aug. 14 vs. Dodgers,  
Oct. 2 vs. Phillies.

| Section       | Gate Price | 6-Pack | Package |
|---------------|------------|--------|---------|
| Terrace       | \$36/40    | \$35   | \$210   |
| Field/Terrace | \$24/28    | \$22   | \$132   |
| Pavilion      |            |        |         |
| Upper Box     | \$12/16    | \$11   | \$66    |

## GROUP TICKETS

Groups of 20 or more receive discounted prices. Call (404) 577-9100 for information.

## 5-GAME PLANS

| Location               | Price | Save Up To |
|------------------------|-------|------------|
| Terrace                | \$175 | 13%        |
| Field/Terrace Pavilion | \$110 | 21%        |
| Upper Box              | \$55  | 31%        |

### ALUMNI SUNDAY

May 16 vs. Diamondbacks, June 20 vs. Royals, July 4 vs. Marlins, Aug. 8 vs. Giants, Sept. 12 vs. Cardinals.

### RIVALS

April 22 vs. Phillies, May 17 vs. Mets, June 1 vs. Phillies, Aug. 31 vs. Mets, Oct. 2 vs. Phillies.

### FRIDAY NIGHT FIREWORKS

April 30 vs. Astros, May 28 vs. Pirates, June 18 vs. Royals, July 2 vs. Marlins, Aug. 13 vs. Dodgers.

### NL EAST

May 18 vs. Mets, June 1 vs. Phillies, June 28 vs. Nationals, Aug. 27 vs. Marlins, Sept. 2 vs. Mets.

### SUMMER SATURDAYS

May 29 vs. Pirates, June 26 vs. Tigers, July 17 vs. Brewers, Aug. 7 vs. Giants, Aug. 14 vs. Dodgers.

### SUMMER WEEKENDS

June 25 vs. Tigers, June 26 vs. Tigers, July 16 vs. Brewers, July 17 vs. Brewers, July 18 vs. Brewers



# Spring Training Stats

FINAL RECORD: 17-12

Hitters ranked by batting average.

Pitchers ranked by ERA.

|                | AVG  | SLG  | OBP  | G  | AB | R  | H  | TB | 2B | 3B | HR | RBI | BB | SO |
|----------------|------|------|------|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|-----|----|----|
| <b>BATTERS</b> |      |      |      |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |     |    |    |
| McCANN         | .500 | .929 | .577 | 17 | 42 | 12 | 21 | 39 | 6  | 0  | 4  | 16  | 9  | 4  |
| HINSKE         | .388 | .551 | .475 | 25 | 49 | 13 | 19 | 27 | 2  | 0  | 2  | 12  | 6  | 8  |
| GLAUS          | .385 | .481 | .492 | 22 | 52 | 13 | 20 | 25 | 5  | 0  | 0  | 11  | 11 | 13 |
| PRADO          | .383 | .500 | .479 | 24 | 60 | 14 | 23 | 30 | 1  | 0  | 2  | 9   | 11 | 8  |
| INFANTE        | .373 | .475 | .439 | 25 | 59 | 7  | 22 | 28 | 6  | 0  | 0  | 6   | 6  | 5  |
| FREEMAN        | .333 | .405 | .391 | 28 | 42 | 6  | 14 | 17 | 3  | 0  | 0  | 7   | 2  | 8  |
| THURSTON       | .333 | .458 | .347 | 27 | 48 | 6  | 16 | 22 | 0  | 0  | 2  | 11  | 1  | 6  |
| ROSS           | .323 | .452 | .405 | 14 | 31 | 6  | 10 | 14 | 4  | 0  | 0  | 8   | 5  | 6  |
| JONES          | .310 | .452 | .418 | 20 | 42 | 5  | 13 | 19 | 3  | 0  | 1  | 10  | 10 | 3  |
| HEYWARD        | .305 | .424 | .423 | 22 | 59 | 11 | 18 | 25 | 4  | 0  | 1  | 5   | 10 | 11 |
| YOUNG          | .294 | .324 | .324 | 25 | 34 | 3  | 10 | 11 | 1  | 0  | 0  | 6   | 2  | 5  |
| DIAZ           | .292 | .338 | .378 | 24 | 65 | 8  | 19 | 22 | 3  | 0  | 0  | 1   | 7  | 13 |
| CABRERA        | .286 | .357 | .342 | 25 | 70 | 12 | 20 | 25 | 3  | 1  | 0  | 5   | 6  | 7  |
| ESCOBAR        | .283 | .453 | .333 | 20 | 53 | 7  | 15 | 24 | 6  | 0  | 1  | 9   | 4  | 5  |
| CONRAD         | .255 | .471 | .339 | 28 | 51 | 9  | 13 | 24 | 3  | 1  | 2  | 10  | 7  | 9  |
| BLANCO         | .241 | .241 | .361 | 20 | 29 | 4  | 7  | 7  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 4   | 6  | 4  |
| SAMMONS        | .182 | .409 | .379 | 20 | 22 | 7  | 4  | 9  | 2  | 0  | 1  | 5   | 7  | 4  |
| HICKS          | .175 | .300 | .298 | 27 | 40 | 4  | 7  | 12 | 2  | 0  | 1  | 5   | 7  | 9  |
| McLOUTH        | .118 | .196 | .217 | 19 | 51 | 8  | 6  | 10 | 1  | 0  | 1  | 4   | 7  | 16 |

**KEY:** **AVG** - Batting average, **SLG** - Slugging percentage, **OBP** - On-base percentage, **G** - Games, **AB** - At-bats, **R** - Runs, **H** - Hits, **TB** - Total bases, **2B** - Doubles, **3B** - Triples, **HR** - Home runs, **RBI** - Runs batted in, **BB** - Walks, **SO** - Strikeouts, **W-L** - Wins-Losses, **ERA** - Earned run average, **GS** - Games started, **GF** - Games finished, **SV** - Saves, **IP** - Innings pitched, **ER** - Earned runs, **OBA** - Opponents' batting average.

|                 | W-L | ERA   | G  | GS | GF | SV | IP   | H  | R  | ER | HR | BB | SO | OBA  |
|-----------------|-----|-------|----|----|----|----|------|----|----|----|----|----|----|------|
| <b>PITCHERS</b> |     |       |    |    |    |    |      |    |    |    |    |    |    |      |
| KIMBEL          | 2-0 | 0.00  | 9  | 0  | 5  | 1  | 9.0  | 3  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 8  | 14 | .100 |
| MOYLAN          | 0-0 | 0.00  | 8  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 8.0  | 7  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 2  | 9  | .233 |
| DUNN            | 0-0 | 1.42  | 6  | 0  | 2  | 0  | 6.1  | 4  | 1  | 1  | 0  | 7  | 4  | .190 |
| HUDSON          | 3-2 | 1.50  | 6  | 6  | 0  | 0  | 24.0 | 26 | 10 | 4  | 0  | 4  | 20 | .280 |
| O'FLAHERTY      | 0-0 | 2.00  | 9  | 0  | 1  | 0  | 9.0  | 10 | 2  | 2  | 0  | 2  | 7  | .286 |
| HANSON          | 1-1 | 2.45  | 5  | 5  | 0  | 0  | 18.1 | 17 | 7  | 5  | 1  | 5  | 19 | .246 |
| KAWAKAMI        | 0-1 | 2.92  | 6  | 6  | 0  | 0  | 24.2 | 28 | 13 | 8  | 4  | 2  | 13 | .277 |
| MEDLEN          | 0-0 | 3.00  | 7  | 3  | 0  | 0  | 15.0 | 13 | 5  | 5  | 1  | 7  | 12 | .232 |
| JURRGENS        | 2-1 | 3.21  | 3  | 3  | 0  | 0  | 14.0 | 12 | 5  | 5  | 1  | 3  | 9  | .235 |
| GEARRIN         | 0-0 | 3.60  | 6  | 0  | 1  | 0  | 5.0  | 4  | 2  | 2  | 0  | 1  | 3  | .211 |
| LOWE            | 3-0 | 4.50  | 6  | 6  | 0  | 0  | 22.0 | 25 | 12 | 11 | 3  | 2  | 18 | .287 |
| SAITO           | 2-0 | 5.00  | 9  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 9.0  | 11 | 5  | 5  | 0  | 3  | 8  | .297 |
| ACOSTA          | 0-2 | 5.14  | 6  | 0  | 1  | 0  | 7.0  | 6  | 5  | 4  | 2  | 5  | 10 | .222 |
| VENTERS         | 1-0 | 5.40  | 10 | 0  | 2  | 0  | 10.0 | 12 | 6  | 6  | 1  | 5  | 7  | .293 |
| WAGNER          | 0-1 | 5.40  | 10 | 0  | 4  | 2  | 10.0 | 11 | 8  | 6  | 0  | 3  | 11 | .297 |
| REYES           | 1-0 | 6.23  | 9  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 13.0 | 14 | 12 | 9  | 0  | 6  | 8  | .269 |
| PROCTOR         | 0-1 | 10.29 | 7  | 1  | 1  | 0  | 7.0  | 7  | 8  | 8  | 2  | 5  | 6  | .259 |



# 2010 PROMOTION SCHEDULE

## EVERY FRIDAY GAME PUBLIX POST-GAME FIREWORKS

|               |          |
|---------------|----------|
| SUNDAY        | MAY 2    |
| MONDAY        | MAY 17   |
| TUESDAY       | MAY 18   |
| WEDNESDAY     | MAY 19   |
| MONDAY        | MAY 31   |
| WEDNESDAY     | JUNE 2   |
| TUESDAY       | JUNE 15  |
| FRIDAY        | JUNE 18  |
| SUNDAY        | JUNE 20  |
| MONDAY        | JUNE 28  |
| THURSDAY      | JULY 22  |
| FRIDAY        | AUG. 6   |
| SUNDAY        | AUG. 8   |
| MONDAY        | AUG. 16  |
| THURSDAY      | AUG. 19  |
| SATURDAY      | AUG. 28  |
| SUNDAY        | AUG. 29  |
| MONDAY        | AUG. 30  |
| THURSDAY      | SEPT. 2  |
| THURSDAY      | SEPT. 9  |
| SUNDAY        | SEPT. 12 |
| MONDAY        | SEPT. 13 |
| WEDNESDAY     | SEPT. 15 |
| MONDAY        | SEPT. 27 |
| FRIDAY-SUNDAY | OCT. 1-3 |
| SATURDAY      | OCT. 2   |

|           |
|-----------|
| ASTROS    |
| METS      |
| METS      |
| REDS      |
| PHILLIES  |
| PHILLIES  |
| RAYS      |
| ROYALS    |
| ROYALS    |
| NATIONALS |
| PADRES    |
| GIANTS    |
| GIANTS    |
| DODGERS   |
| NATIONALS |
| MARLINS   |
| MARLINS   |
| METS      |
| METS      |
| CARDINALS |
| CARDINALS |
| NATIONALS |
| NATIONALS |
| MARLINS   |
| PHILLIES  |
| PHILLIES  |

## EVERY SUNDAY GAME PRE-GAME ALUMNI MEET & GREET POST-GAME KIDS RUN THE BASES

|                                                      |
|------------------------------------------------------|
| BARK IN THE PARK                                     |
| BUCK BELUE "BUCK NIGHT"                              |
| MARCHING BAND NIGHT                                  |
| GO GREEN EXPO                                        |
| BEACH BOYS CONCERT                                   |
| BUSINESS FAN DAY                                     |
| COLLEGE NIGHT                                        |
| '70S NIGHT                                           |
| PROSTATE CANCER AWARENESS DAY                        |
| BUCK BELUE "BUCK NIGHT"                              |
| BUSINESS FAN DAY                                     |
| WILD WEST NIGHT                                      |
| ULTIMATE KIDS DAY                                    |
| BUCK BELUE "BUCK NIGHT"                              |
| BUSINESS FAN DAY                                     |
| HOME SCHOOL DAY                                      |
| CLASSIC CAR SHOW                                     |
| BARK IN THE PARK                                     |
| BUCK BELUE "BUCK NIGHT"                              |
| NASCAR NIGHT                                         |
| ROBERTO CLEMENTE/<br>LATIN & HISPANIC HERITAGE NIGHT |
| BREAST CANCER AWARENESS DAY                          |
| BUCK BELUE "BUCK NIGHT"                              |
| BUSINESS FAN DAY                                     |
| BUCK BELUE "BUCK NIGHT"                              |
| FAN APPRECIATION WEEKEND                             |
| BOBBY COX TRIBUTE                                    |



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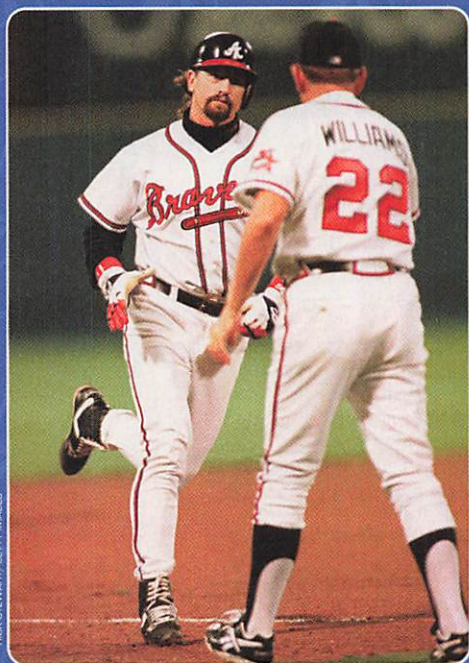
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ROCK STEWART / GETTY IMAGES



Former Brave Charlie O'Brien, shown with his baseball-playing sons, Chris (center) and Cameron, was Greg Maddux's regular catcher in 1994 and '95.

TWIST

## COWBOY CATCHER

CHARLIE O'BRIEN'S ON THE GO, DEVELOPING BALLPLAYERS AND RUNNING A BIG RANCH

BY BRIAN KNAPP

**CHARLIE O'BRIEN KEEPS A STEADY PACE**, from the day-to-day work on his 12,000-acre ranch to his role as an assistant baseball coach and his occasional turn as a hunting show host for Mossy Oak camouflage.

O'Brien has not chosen the life of rest and relaxation one might expect from a 50-year-old former catcher. And a baseball cap remains part of his wardrobe.

A member of the 1995 World Champion Braves, O'Brien serves as pitching coach for his alma mater, Bishop Kelly High School, in Tulsa, Okla., imparting the wisdom and knowledge he gained in 15 years behind the plate in the major leagues. He's spent three seasons with the program, which he helped lead to two state championships as a player in the late 1970s.

"I was always impressed with his approach to the game," said Scott Ellis, head coach at Bishop Kelly. "When I was named coach three seasons ago, I knew I wanted Charlie on my coaching staff. I wanted to showcase our baseball program's rich history so that our players could build on the tradition they represent."

For O'Brien — whose youngest son, Cameron, plays third base for the school — the payoff comes in the results. He prides himself on developing players.

"I enjoy watching kids get it," O'Brien said. "I enjoy watching them get better, seeing the light bulb come on, getting kids to a point where they can do more than they thought they could do."

The Comets have won eight consecutive region championships and finished the 2009 season with a 27-10 record, advancing to the state semi-finals. Ellis welcomes O'Brien's presence in the dugout.

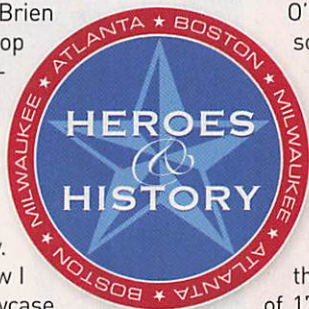
"I tease Charlie about being the most overqualified and underpaid assistant high school baseball coach in the country," he said. "It says a lot about his love for teaching the game that he chooses to give back at the high school level."

O'Brien's outreach only begins there. Once the high school season reaches its climax, he shifts gears and returns to his position as the bench coach for the Midwest Nationals, a select baseball organization based in Springfield, Mo. O'Brien got involved in the program when his oldest son, Chris, now a sophomore third baseman at Wichita State University, was a junior in high school.

The team's season takes up nine weekends from the end of May until July. The Nationals, which consist of 17-20 high school players, travel extensively, making stops in Louisville, Ky., St. Louis and Dallas.

"It's where most of the recruiting is done now," O'Brien said. "There's really good baseball being played, almost like a prelude to college. I basically remind the coach of situations, bench personnel, and make sure he has as many options as possible. I'm in his ear all the time, making sure guys get their at-bats, things like that."

Randy Merryman, president and head coach of the Nationals, considers O'Brien an integral part of his program, which has pro-





duced 68 Div. 1 college players and two first-round draft picks.

"Having Charlie on our staff is a great asset," Merryman said. "The knowledge he provides to our players is something you don't find much with 18-and-under baseball."

Away from the diamond, O'Brien spends much of his time tending to his Catch 22 Ranch. He plans to put the property to charitable use soon with special hunts for returning armed services veterans as part of the Wounded Warrior Project. Celebrity hunts, autograph signings, and sponsor contributions will also raise money for the cause.

O'Brien, who purchased the ranch in 1992, offers "10 to 12 guys" the chance to hunt on his land each year. In addition, more than 100 cattle call it home.

"It's a seven-day-a-week job," said O'Brien, whose Mossy Oak-sponsored hunting shows have appeared on the Outdoor and Pursuit channels. "When I'm working on it, I leave at 7:30 in the morning and come back at 5 in the evening, but it's something I enjoy doing. The chores are never done."

That blue-collar approach served O'Brien well during his playing career, which included two years (1994-95) as a Brave. He considers Atlanta "by far my favorite place to play." A backup to Javy Lopez, he hit 17 homers and drove in 51 runs in 118 games with the Braves but remains best known for his relationship with Greg Maddux.

O'Brien caught the future Hall of Famer almost exclusively during his two-year stint in Atlanta, when Maddux won the last two of his four straight Cy Young Awards.

"He was the best pitcher I ever caught," said O'Brien, who also caught seven-time Cy Young Award winner Roger Clemens. "He was so precise, even when he warmed up. He never missed his spot. He had great talent, but he was no doubt the smartest pitcher I caught. It was incredible to sit back and catch his stuff."

O'Brien left the Braves via free agency following 1995, though not by choice. Bypassed in favor of the younger Eddie Perez, he was forced to find a new place to play.

After departing Atlanta, O'Brien bounced from the Blue Jays to the White Sox to the Angels before closing his career with a nine-game stint for Montreal in 2000. A career .221 batter, he hit 56 home runs and drove in 261 but left his most indelible mark on the game as a pioneer in the design of the hockey-style catcher's mask, which has reduced wear and tear on the men behind the plate.

## COX COLLECTIBLES RISING IN VALUE

**NO MAJOR LEAGUE MANAGER** with as many wins as Bobby Cox has retired since 1950. That's the year all-time leader Connie Mack (3,731) managed his final game. So, when a manager of Cox's stature retires, collectors take notice.

"As he goes through the tour of his last season, I'm sure there will be some different things that become available, such as signed lineup cards or game-used jerseys," said Ari Witkes, vice president of New York City-based Grandstand Sports & Memorabilia Inc. "Obviously, the value of those items will appreciate over time."

After he retires following this season, Cox will have filled out over 4,500 lineup cards.

Autographed lineup cards have yet to become hugely popular collectibles, mainly because there haven't been that many available to the public. That appears to be changing.

The most historic and valuable lineup cards are usually kept by individual players or teams, according to Witkes. While Cox's final lineup card will almost definitely not get released to the public, fans have opportunities to purchase others from his final season.

"Throughout the year, we put a variety of Braves lineup cards on our online auction found at Braves.com," said Lisa Wessinger, the Braves' merchandise coordinator. "We also sell the lineup cards directly to our fans. These are sold on a first-come, first-serve basis."

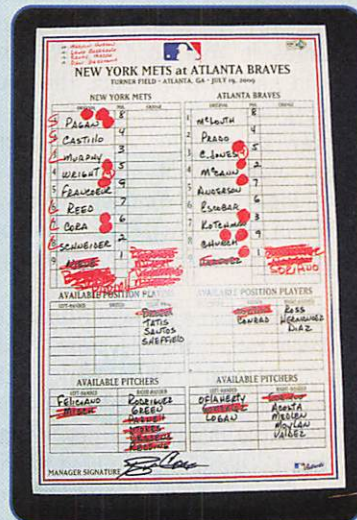
The club has lineup cards available from the last half of the 2009 season, as well. Interested fans can call Wessinger at (404) 494-1103 to inquire about cards for specific games. The Braves also have game-used Cox jerseys from 2009 – in all four of the team's uniform styles – that sell for \$600 each.

The most popular collectibles for managers are autographed baseballs and photos. The value of Cox's signed memorabilia is impacted by his longevity. Since he has managed 29 seasons, he has autographed numerous items through the years, which reduces their price somewhat. Witkes said his signed baseballs currently cost around \$150 apiece.

As a certain future Hall of Famer, Cox's collectibles will increase in value once he reaches Cooperstown. And that day is probably not too far off. Since Cox is over 65 years old, he won't have to wait five years for eligibility like players. He becomes eligible just six months after he retires.

While memorabilia from great managers isn't as highly sought after as pieces from great players, select managers attract significant interest from collectors. Hunt Auctions sold one of Joe Torre's 1984 Atlanta Braves home jerseys for \$800 this past February. In that same auction, a signed photo of former Boston Braves manager Billy Southworth sold for \$3,250. Southworth – who also managed the Cardinals and wears their uniform in the photo – was inducted into the Hall of Fame in 2008.

"Joe Torre is very popular, especially when he was in New York. His stuff sold very well," said Witkes, who mentioned the popularity of Yankees Hall of Fame manager Casey Stengel, as well. "With managers, a lot depends on their personality and obviously, their accomplishments."





# ALUMNI NOTES



**Woody Woodward** (INF, 1963-68) was among members of the 1960 Coral Gables (Fla.) Senior High School state championship baseball team that reunited for a 50th anniversary reunion prior to one of the school's games in mid-April on Woodward Field, named in his honor. The returning players were introduced and threw out ceremonial first pitches, and a golf event and dinner were included in the reunion. Woodward lives in Palm Coast, Fla., and is a part-time scout for the Seattle Mariners.

The Milwaukee Brewers have completely rebuilt the Milwaukee Braves Wall of Honor at Miller Park. Located on the third base side of the field level concourse, it includes new plaques, artwork, lighting and photo banners. The Braves called Milwaukee home from 1953 to 1965. Plaques honor the former Braves such as **Warren Spahn** (LHP, 1942, '46-64), **Johnny Logan** (SS, 1951-61), **Andy Pafko** (OF, 1953-59) and **Bobby Thomson** (OF, 1954-57), as well as player-turned-broadcaster **Bob Uecker** (C, 1962-63, '67). Also part of the wall is a team photo of the 1957 World Championship Braves. The Miller Park parking lots have been renamed for such players as Hank Aaron, and the "Uecker Lot," will include a special "front row" parking deal for 10 fans.

**Dale Murphy** (OF/C/1B, 1976-90) is among the nominees for the second class of the Irish American Baseball Hall of Fame located at Foley's New York Pub & Restaurant at 18 West 33rd Street in New York, across the street from the Empire State Building. Murphy was the keynote speaker at the Mar. 25 Steak and Burger Dinner at Augusta State University's Christenberry Field House, a fundraiser for the Boys & Girls Clubs of Augusta, Ga.

As part of its annual Opening Day festivities, the Pacific Coast League announced the induction of the first Atlanta Braves manager, the late **Bobby Bragan** (MGR, 1963-66), into its Hall of Fame.

**Javy Lopez** (C, 1992-2003) was the Mississippi Braves' special guest speaker April 12 at a Home Run Luncheon in the Farm Bureau Grill at Trustmark Park. He later threw out the ceremonial first pitch and signed autographs. **Brian Jordan** (OF, 1999-2001, '05-06) was scheduled to appear at the April 19 luncheon. Other guests scheduled for M-Braves luncheons include: May 17 - **Dale Murphy** (OF/C/1B, 1976-90), May 24 - **Greg Olson** (C, 1990-93), June 14 - **Phil Niekro** (RHP, 1964-83, '87), and July 26 - **Sid Bream** (1B, 1991-93). For more information or to place orders, contact the Mississippi Braves ticket office at (601) 932-8788.

Lopez also appeared at the West Tenn Diamond Jaxx's Pringles Park in Jackson, Tenn., April 16, and Murphy is scheduled to be there June 5.

**Darrel Chaney** (INF, 1976-79), **Brian Jordan** (OF, 1999-2001, '05-06), **Javy Lopez** (C, 1992-2003) and **Phil Niekro** (RHP, 1964-83, '87) were among the celebrities participating in the annual golf tournament to benefit United Way of White County held in Helen, Ga., at Innsbruck Golf Club April 12. Chaney is the organizer of the event.

**Otis Nixon** (OF, 1991-93, '99) was scheduled to make an appearance at the Atlanta Braves Fan Club Tailgate Event on April 17, prior to the game against Colorado. He was to sign his book, "Keeping it Real." For information on the new fan club, visit atlantabravesfanclub.com.

**Ryan Langerhans** (OF, 2002, '05-07) was designated for assignment by Seattle. He cleared waivers and was assigned to Tacoma.

**Marcus Giles** (2B, 2001-06) pleaded guilty April 1 to a misdemeanor battery charge for assaulting his wife in El Cajon, Calif., last fall. He was placed on three years probation and ordered to take a year of domestic violence counseling.

**Alan Embree** (LHP, 1997-98) signed a minor league contract with Boston.

## BIRTHDAYS

### MAY

|                  |                                                                                       |
|------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1 <sup>ST</sup>  | CHARLIE O'BRIEN (50)<br>ARMANDO REYNOSO (44)<br>MANNY ACOSTA (29)                     |
| 2 <sup>ND</sup>  | CLAY CARROLL (69)<br>JARROD SALTALAMACCHIA (25)<br>JOSE ASCANIO (25)                  |
| 3 <sup>RD</sup>  | CHRIS CANNIZZARO (72)<br>GABE MOLINA (35)                                             |
| 4 <sup>TH</sup>  | BERT THIEL (84)<br>KEN OBERKFELL (54)<br><b>EDDIE PEREZ (42)</b><br>JOE BOROWSKI (39) |
| 5 <sup>TH</sup>  | LUIS VALDEZ (26)                                                                      |
| 6 <sup>TH</sup>  | DICK COLE (84)                                                                        |
| 7 <sup>TH</sup>  | CLAUDE RAYMOND (73)                                                                   |
| 9 <sup>TH</sup>  | TONY BARTIROME (78)                                                                   |
| 10 <sup>TH</sup> | MERRITT RANNEY (72)                                                                   |
| 11 <sup>TH</sup> | MILT PAPPAS (71)<br>TRENIDAD HUBBARD (44)<br>KERRY LIGTENBERG (39)                    |
| 12 <sup>TH</sup> | FELIPE ALOU (75)<br>JOE NOLAN (59)<br>WES HELMS (34)                                  |
| 14 <sup>TH</sup> | DENNIS MARTINEZ (55)                                                                  |
| 15 <sup>TH</sup> | JOHN SMOLTZ (43)<br>CLINT SAMMONS (27)                                                |
| 16 <sup>TH</sup> | BOB BRUCE (77)                                                                        |
| 17 <sup>TH</sup> | PASCUAL PEREZ (53)<br>JOHN FOSTER (32)                                                |
| 18 <sup>TH</sup> | MARCUS GILES (32)                                                                     |
| 19 <sup>TH</sup> | AL SANTORINI (62)<br>RICK CERONE (56)                                                 |
| 21 <sup>ST</sup> | EARL HERSH (78)<br><b>BOBBY COX (69)</b><br>PAUL RUNGE (52)<br>TOM MARTIN (40)        |
| 22 <sup>ND</sup> | RON PICHE (75)<br>WALT HRINIAK (67)<br>MIKE EDEN (61)<br>JULIAN TAVAREZ (37)          |
| 23 <sup>RD</sup> | CLYDE KING (86)<br>RAMON CARABALLO (41)<br>MIKE GONZALEZ (32)                         |
| 24 <sup>TH</sup> | DANNY BAUTISTA (38)                                                                   |
| 25 <sup>TH</sup> | JOHN MONTEFUSCO (60)<br>FERNANDO LUNAR (33)                                           |
| 26 <sup>TH</sup> | EDDIE HAAS (75)<br>DARRELL EVANS (63)<br>RANDALL SIMON (35)                           |
| 27 <sup>TH</sup> | JIM VATCHER (44)                                                                      |
| 28 <sup>TH</sup> | ED OLWINE (52)<br>DUANE WARD (46)                                                     |
| 29 <sup>TH</sup> | ROBERTO VARGAS (81)<br>BLUE MOON ODOM (65)                                            |
| 31 <sup>ST</sup> | LARRY OWEN (55)<br>KENNY LOFTON (43)                                                  |





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## OF COX & MEN

**IF YOU'VE EVER** wanted to thank Bobby Cox for all he's done in helping turn the Atlanta Braves into one of the greatest franchises in professional sports, now's your opportunity. As Cox manages the Braves for one final season, ChopTalk has teamed with acclaimed artist Steve Penley to create a lasting gift for Cox - one that will be presented to him on behalf of the greatest Braves fans in the world. Don't miss the details on this exciting, once-in-a-lifetime promotion that's outlined on pages 32-33.

For only \$25, you can put your name on the poster that will be created from Penley's original portrait of Cox that will be published as a special, 8-page pullout in the September issue. Additionally, when the original painting is presented to Cox, he will also receive a reproduction of the back of the poster that will include the names of all the fans that made it possible. A portion of the proceeds from this promotion also will be presented to Cox's favorite charity, the Homeless Pets Foundation.

Be sure to act quickly to thank Cox for all he's done, because the July 15 deadline (all checks and credit card orders must clear payment by that date) will come quickly. Names submitted after the deadline cannot be included on the poster, due to production deadlines.

If you're a regular subscriber, you'll automatically receive a copy of the poster in the September issue. However, if you want an unfolded poster that will be rolled and mailed in a tube, be sure to check that option on your order form.

With Mother's Day and Father's Day coming up, as well as graduation, keep in mind that putting someone else's name on the poster for them makes a memorable - and very affordable - gift option.

You can use up to 30 spaces to submit your name, or your family name (example: John, Sue & Billy Robinson, or John Robinson Family), or your business name. Just remember there's a 30-character limit, including spaces and punctuation.

Either submit the form on page 33 or a photocopy, or clearly print the information on a sheet of paper, and mail it to ChopTalk, Bobby Cox Portrait, P.O. Box

81247, Conyers, Ga. 30013-9247. You also can call 1-877-655-2467 (CHOP) from 10 a.m.-6 p.m. (Eastern), Monday-Friday. Please be patient if you experience a busy signal due to high call volume.

The season is just two weeks old at this writing, and the Braves already have experienced a 17-2 loss (at San Diego April 12) and a no-hitter (to Colorado April 18). Yet, optimism about the season remains high for many reasons, not the least of which is a remarkable rookie named Jason "Big Thunder" Heyward.

You can tell by Bobby Cox's words in his column on page 19 that he wants to temper his excitement and expectations about Heyward - and that he wants the rest of us to do the same. However, you also can tell that even he can't deny the obvious - that Heyward is incredibly special.

If his first-swing, first-at-bat home run on Opening Day didn't convince you - and really, it shouldn't have - then by the time he drilled an opposite-field, two-run, walk-off single against Colorado April 18, you knew for sure that he's the real deal.

The challenges that will face Heyward as his success continues and his fame mushrooms are immense. The challenges of baseball alone are immense. Yet four months shy of his 21st birthday, Heyward has demonstrated that he's not only up to the task, he welcomes it. In the end, that is what makes him special and what will measure his greatness. He's groomed himself - with the help of his parents and coaches - for this most of his young life.

Heyward's preparation has collided with the opportunity he's dreamed of, and the result could well prove to be the perfect nightmare pitchers have long dreaded they'd encounter.

If not for Heyward's incredible storyline, the early headlines would belong to Martin Prado. But like Heyward, Prado is not going away. Together, they give great promise to a lineup still trying to find its stride.

**THIS ISSUE OF CHOPTALK** was mailed April 23. The June issue will be mailed May 21.





BY PATTY RASMUSSEN

Hank Aaron and Jason Heyward meet on Opening Day, when Heyward was given the honor of catching Aaron's ceremonial first pitch.



## WALK WITH A LEGEND

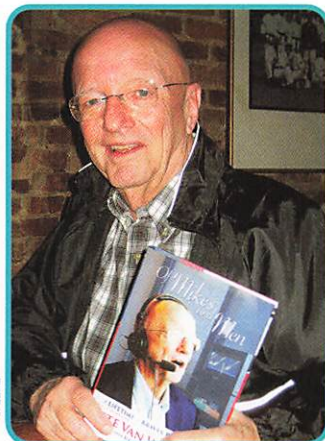
**FANS CAN STROLL** with **Hank Aaron** (OF/1B, 1954-74) May 22 in Atlanta when he participates in the Arthritis Walk at Atlantic Station. He is encouraging others to support the fight against arthritis by joining [teamhank.com](http://teamhank.com). Aaron, who long battled pain from osteoarthritis in his knees, is touting the benefits of treatment with Synvisc-One injections. For every person who joins Hank's team, Genzyme, maker of Synvisc-One, will contribute a \$1 donation to the Arthritis Foundation, up to \$10,000. He recently was photographed at Turner Field for print ads and made a video sharing his story as part of the "Get Back in the Game" public service campaign, sponsored by the Arthritis Foundation.

**RETIRED BRAVES** Hall of Fame broadcaster **Pete Van Wieren** (below) threw out the ceremonial first pitch at the home opener of the Rome Braves, April 16. He and sports journalist **Jack Wilkinson** will be the special guest speakers at the Braves 400 Fan Club luncheon Monday, May 17, at Turner Field's 755 Club. The luncheon will also feature a signing of Van Wieren's recently released memoir, written with Wilkinson, "Of Mikes and Men: A Lifetime of Braves Baseball." Tickets are available until May 7 online at [braves400.org](http://braves400.org). The cost is \$25 for club members, \$30 for non-members, and includes lunch. Books will be available and can be autographed at the luncheon. ChopTalk readers also can order the book by calling 1-800-222-4657 (mention "Pete"). Other book signings in May include, Saturday, May 1, 11 a.m., at the CNN Center Braves Clubhouse Store, Thursday May 13, 7 p.m., at the Barnes & Noble in Macon on Riverside Dr., Saturday May 29, 5 p.m., at the Turner Field Braves Clubhouse Store...

**Bobby Cox** was presented with a Mousekar trophy prior to the final spring training game at Champion Stadium. The Mousekar honors individual and team achievements at Walt Disney World. **Faron Kelley**, the director of marketing

for Disney Sports, and Mickey Mouse made the presentation. The trophy inscription reads, "Bobby Cox, Thank you for making ESPN Wide World of Sports and the Walt Disney World Resort your winter home for the past 13 years..."

Prior to the April 2 exhibition game, **Jason Heyward** was announced as an Honorary Ambassador and spokesperson for the Jr. Braves and L.E.A.D. (Launch, Expose, Advise, Direct) Middle School Baseball Development League. Heyward addressed the 2010 L.E.A.D. Ambassadors, student-athletes involved in the L.E.A.D. program, and middle school students participating in the middle school baseball initiative. He also unveiled the Jason Heyward Fan Club t-shirt, available online for \$14.99 at [hey-maker22.com](http://hey-maker22.com). All proceeds from the sale of the t-shirts go to L.E.A.D., an instructional baseball program for inner city kids founded by **C.J. Steward**, Heyward's long-time hitting



instructor...

**Kim Hudson** and her father, **Harold Bruner**, traveled to San Francisco to be on hand for **Tim Hudson**'s first start of the season, April 9. Kim and her dad spent the next day cycling 19 miles from Fisherman's Wharf on the waterfront



# CATCHER'S CAUSE



**ASHLEY McCANN** (L with Allison Guy) attended Fashion Funds the Cure at Saks Fifth Avenue at Phipps Plaza in Atlanta on Mar. 30. The event raised over \$82,000 to benefit the Rally Foundation for Childhood Cancer Research and featured a fashion show with professional models and special child models, all Rally kids who are fighting cancer. The host for the evening was **Curtis Lofton**, NFL linebacker for the

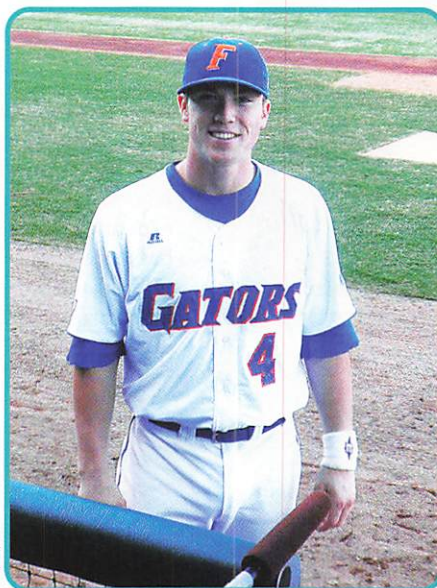
Atlanta Falcons. **Jack McKeon**, manager of the 2003 World Champion Florida Marlins, served as escort for one of the Rally models during the fashion show. Also in attendance were Ashley's mother, **MaryAnn Jarusinski**, mother-in-law, **Sherry McCann**, and friends **Skip** and **Victoria Moore**, who pledged \$1,000 for every home run hit by **Brian McCann** this season as part of the McCann 16 Home Run Challenge. Go online to [rallyfoundation.org](http://rallyfoundation.org) for more information on how to participate in the McCann 16 Home Run Challenge.

of San Francisco, over the famed Golden Gate Bridge, through Sausalito, and on to Tiburon, a city on a peninsula across the bay from San Francisco. They wisely took a ferry back to the city from Tiburon. "Nineteen miles was enough," said Kim...

Former Braves catcher **Bruce "Eggs" Benedict** attended the first day of competition, Friday, April 9, at the Masters golf tournament in Augusta with his son, **Griffin**...

Turner Field organist **Matthew Kaminski** and his trio performed jazz selections and American standards at the Georgia Music Hall of Fame, "Live at Five Concert Series," on April 27 in Macon...

**Nolan Fontana** (R), grandson of Braves Hall of Fame pitcher and 1957 World Series MVP **Lou Burdette**, is already a standout baseball player at the University of Florida. Fontana, who plays shortstop for the



Gators, was named SEC Freshman of the Week for his exemplary play in March...

**Bobby Cox** had a special cheering section in the stands at Petco Park during the Braves series April 12-15. Cox's aunt, **Katherine Cox**, and cousin, **Sandra Ott**, made the trip to San Diego from their home in Selma, Calif., in order to watch Cox manage one last time...

**Kim Hudson** and a group of players' wives participated in the annual Walk for Wishes, a fundraiser for Make-A-Wish Foundation of Alabama and Georgia, April 17, at Atlantic Station in Midtown Atlanta. Kim's team raised over \$20,000 for Make-A-Wish, the charity that grants wishes to children with life-threatening medical conditions.

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# BEARDED WONDER

**FORMER BRAVES CATCHER** and fan favorite **Javy Lopez** (L), sporting a new look with a beard, attended a week of spring training at the invitation of the Braves organization. "I spent most of my time with the coaches," said Lopez, "listening to them, watching how they interact with the players, and learning more about what they do. I would definitely like to work in the Braves organization someday, coach-

ing, and told that to **Frank Wren** the day I was leaving." In the meantime, Lopez continues to build his Bones baseball bat company, supplying bats to many players in the Braves minor leagues as well as to **Yunel Escobar**, **Martin Prado**, **Brian McCann** and **Jason Heyward**. "If they use them, great," said Lopez. "I just want to get them out there, in the clubhouse, so guys can try them."



# TALKIN' CHOP

LETTERS & PHOTOS FROM OUR READERS

WHETHER YOU'RE HAVING FUN AT TURNER FIELD, EXPERIENCING A CLOSE ENCOUNTER WITH YOUR FAVORITE BRAVES PLAYER, OR JUST SHOWING OFF YOUR COLLECTION OF BRAVES STUFF OR TRYING ON YOUR NEW BRAVES SHIRT, WE WANT TO HEAR ABOUT IT AND SEE A PICTURE.



## ULTIMATE GIFT ✉

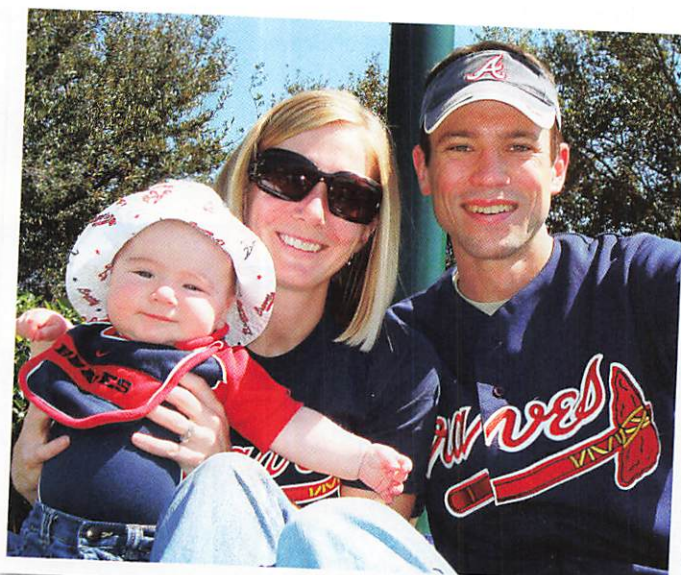
ChopTalk provided this grandma the perfect Christmas gift for my 15-year-old grandson, Jerrod Harmon, who began following the Braves when he was only 3 years old. He learned his numbers by the team jerseys. We've made several trips from Missouri to vacation in Atlanta, each trip including three Braves games. Jerrod's older cousin, April, got him hooked on Chipper and Andruw in 1997, and he'll be a Braves fan forever. But it was Javy Lopez who kept his attention. As a freshman in high school, he made the varsity baseball team last year and began using wooden bats. You can imagine how excited he was when he saw the May '09 CT article about Javy and his new company, Bones Bats. I called the number on his web site (bonesbat.com) and was surprised when Javy returned my call and recommended the model my grandson should be using. I was so excited that I couldn't keep the secret until Christmas, and Jerrod was so pumped that his favorite player suggested he should be using a longer bat. Bones crafted the custom bats beautifully, using the team colors for Jerrod's school. Thanks to the Bones web site (bonesbat.com), I expect Jerrod will find a logo cap and t-shirt in his Easter basket! We read ChopTalk from cover to cover each month, and we thank you and Javy for helping me provide Jerrod with a special gift!

CHRIS AUSTIN  
Fair Grove, Mo.

## AVERY'S NAMESAKE ✉

This is a photo of my family from the Braves-Astros spring training game Mar. 7. In addition to my wife (Robin), the picture includes our first son, Avery. My wife grew up in Atlanta and was a huge fan of the Braves, most specifically of Steve Avery. We didn't find out if Avery was going to be a boy or girl before he was born, but we decided that Avery was going to be his (or her) name, regardless. Robin actually stays in touch with Steve and his family, and we'll be sending photos from the game to them, as well. Robin's grandmother is a lifelong Braves fan and would really enjoy seeing a photo of her great grandson in ChopTalk. This past weekend's game was his first of what I'm sure will be many trips to see the Braves play in Orlando and at Turner Field. Since I got out of the Navy, my wife and I have lived in Fernandina Beach, Fla., a little island just north of Jacksonville, but we make a lot of trips to Atlanta to see Robin's family.

TOBY LENTZ,  
Fernandina Beach, Fla.



CHOPTALK AND THE ATLANTA BRAVES SUPPORT OUR TROOPS



## LOYAL IN THE NORTHEAST

My love for the Braves is going on 20 years. I don't know the reason for sticking with the Braves in an area dominated by the Yankees and Mets, but I'm glad I did. Little did I know that I was just finding the Braves before they were about to start the most incredible streak in the history of sports - 14 straight division titles. Living in Connecticut makes it difficult to catch as many live Braves games as I would like, but whenever I get the opportunity, I'm there. I've made it to Braves-Mets games at Shea Stadium and Citi Field. I braved a tornado warning in 2008 to watch a Myrtle Beach Pelicans game at BB&T Coastal Field, and just recently, made the trip to Champion Stadium to see Jair Jurrjens make a spring training start against the Marlins. I also had the pleasure of watching Jason Heyward play live for the first time, and can now see why he is going to be a handful for every team in the league for many years. With one of the best pitching rotations and the top catcher in the National League, a shut-down closer, and very deep bench, the Braves are primed to succeed in 2010.

HOBSON LOPES  
New Milford, CT



## SHARE YOUR BRAVES FEVER!

### WRITE TO US

Talkin' Chop c/o ChopTalk  
P.O. Box 81247  
Conyers, Ga. 30013-9247  
Letters@ChopTalkonline.com

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### WRITE THE BRAVES

Atlanta Braves  
P.O. Box 4064  
Atlanta, Ga. 30302

For the Braves players, Bobby Cox, the coaches, broadcasters, or members of the front office.

If you request a response, be sure to include a self-addressed, stamped envelope. Never send anything of value that you want returned. This is no guarantee of a reply.

## THE MELK MAN



WELL, GET  
READY FOR  
MELKY  
CABRERA!





# XTRA INNINGS

## RINGS OF HONOR

**MEMBERS** of last season's Danville Braves were able to celebrate winning the Appalachian League championship again in spring training. The coaching staff, headed by manager Paul Runge, and the players received their championship rings on Mar. 31 at ESPN Wide World of Sports. For most of the players, the award represented the first ring they've earned in their careers.

"It's pretty amazing to get a ring your first year in pro ball," said shortstop Mycal Jones, who opened the 2010 season at Rome after leading the Appy League with 50 runs scored and six triples last year.

"A lot of the older guys will tell you there aren't many times when you get the opportunity to play for something like this. It's beautiful, and it's a great way to start my career."

The D-Braves posted the best regular-season record in the Appy League last year at 47-21 before sweeping the Elizabethton Twins in two games in the championship series.

- BILL BALLEW



Shortstop Mycal Jones gets his Appalachian League championship ring from Kurt Kemp (L), director of player development, and GM Frank Wren.

Former Braves catcher Bob Uecker speaks at his induction into the World Wrestling Entertainment Hall of Fame.

### THE FRONT ROW

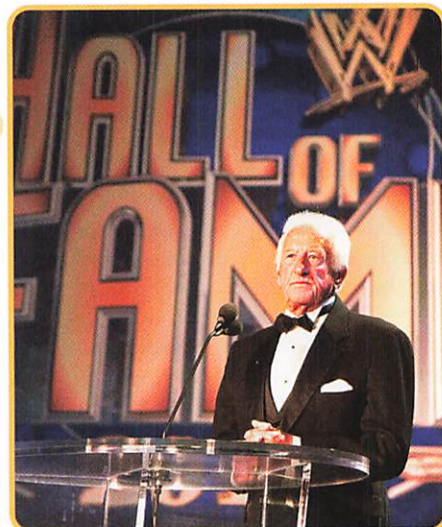
Bob Uecker, a former Braves catcher (1962-63, '67) hit 741 fewer career home runs than Hank Aaron (14 to 755), but he's carved out quite a career for himself as a comedian, actor and broadcaster whose honors include a spot in the Radio Hall of Fame. Both Uecker and Aaron added to their impressive resumes recently.

Uecker was inducted into the celebrity wing of the World Wrestling Entertainment (WWE) Hall of Fame Mar. 27 in Phoenix for his role as a ringside announcer and backstage interviewer at two Wrestlemanias. The ceremony at the Dodge Theater was aired on the USA Network.

Aaron, who probably can't count all the halls of fame he's in, was inducted into the Palm Beach County (Fla.) Sports Hall of Fame Mar. 21. The Braves held spring training in West Palm Beach the second half of Aaron's career, and he became attached to it and maintains a second home there.

### REMEMBERING EDDIE

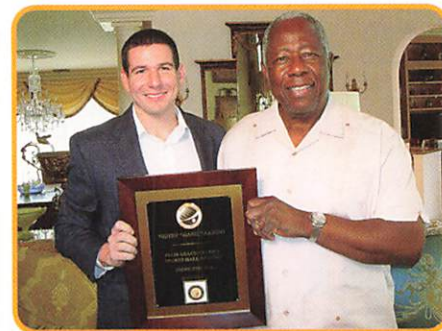
The Milwaukee Braves Historical Association (MBHA) will hold a banquet May 13 at Potawatomi Bingo Casino in Milwaukee at which Felix Mantilla (INF/OF, 1956-61) and Stan Lopata (C/1B, 1959-60) will be honored guests. Additionally, Dr. Eddie Mathews, son of the late Eddie Mathews who was a Hall of Fame third baseman for the Braves (1952-66), as well as a manager (1972-74), will nar-



ALBERT STANOLA

rate a visual presentation about his father's life and career.

Tickets are \$75 apiece and can be obtained from any MBHA member or by mailing a check to treasurer Tom Kaminski at 2614 E. Bottsford Ave., St. Francis, Wisc. 532335. A cocktail hour begins at 6 p.m. (Central), followed by dinner at 7.



PALM BEACH COUNTY SPORTS COMMISSION

Hank Aaron accepts his plaque for induction into the Palm Beach County Sports Hall of Fame from George Linley of the Palm Beach County Sports Commission.

## FAN CLUBS

### BRAVES 400 FAN CLUB

The Braves 400 Fan Club is the official fan club of the Atlanta Braves. It is a non-profit organization dedicated to supporting baseball at all levels. Annual membership is \$25 and includes a newsletter and the opportunity to participate in activities such as road trips, luncheons, the annual banquet, and charitable events. Send payment to: Braves 400 Fan Club, P.O. Box 7689, Atlanta, Ga. 30309. For more information, call the organization's hotline at (770) 416-4539 or visit [braves400.org](http://braves400.org).

### ATLANTA BRAVES FAN CLUB

The newly formed Atlanta Braves Fan Club is interested in fostering camaraderie among Braves fans by hosting tailgate parties, game-watching parties and other activities. A one-year membership is \$25 and includes \$5 off game tickets (\$16 reduced to \$11). Visit [atlantabravesfanclub.com](http://atlantabravesfanclub.com) for information and to sign up.

### MILWAUKEE BRAVES HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

The Milwaukee Braves Historical Association is a non-profit organization that promotes the memory of the Milwaukee Braves (1953-65). Annual membership is \$25 and includes a newsletter. Send payment to: Milwaukee Braves Historical Association, 6700 N. Range Line Rd., Glendale, Wisc. 53209. For information, call (414) 347-1212 or visit [milwaukee-braveshistoricalassociation.com](http://milwaukee-braveshistoricalassociation.com).

### BOSTON BRAVES HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

The Boston Braves Historical Association is a non-profit organization dedicated to keeping alive the memory of the Braves in the city where the franchise began in 1871 and that it represented through 1952. Annual membership is \$15 and includes a newsletter. Send payment to: Boston Braves Historical Association, P.O. Box 67195, Chestnut Hill, Mass. 02467-0002. For more information, visit [boston-braves.com](http://boston-braves.com) or e-mail [bbraves@beld.net](mailto:bbraves@beld.net).





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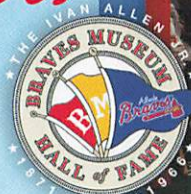




# Tour the Home of the Braves



# TURNER FIELD



**VISIT THE BRAVES MUSEUM & HALL OF FAME AT TURNER FIELD** and view more than 600 Braves artifacts and photographs on display. See items from the team's years in Boston (1871-1952), Milwaukee (1953-65), and Atlanta (1966-present), including Hank Aaron's 715th home run bat and ball, the 1995 World Series trophy and much more.

**TAKE A ONE-HOUR GUIDED TOUR OF TURNER FIELD** to many areas off limits during games, such as the press box, clubhouse, dugout and the SunTrust Club. Group and school tours are offered year-round, including specialized tours on the subjects of math and careers in sports. **Call 404-614-2311.**



## BOBBY COX \$6 DAYS

In honor of Bobby Cox's last season as Braves manager, tours of Turner Field will be \$6 on the following days in 2010.

|      |              |                                                                               |
|------|--------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 2010 | April 10     | Bobby earned his first managerial win in 1978                                 |
|      | May 21       | Bobby's birthday                                                              |
|      | June 16      | Bobby became the winningest manager in Braves history with 1,005 wins in 1998 |
|      | July 11      | Bobby managed the 2000 All-Star Game at Turner Field                          |
|      | August 28    | Bobby earned his 1,500th career win in 1999                                   |
|      | September 29 | Bobby earned his 2,000th career win in 2004                                   |

**For tour or museum information call 404-614-2311 or order tickets at [braves.com/tours](http://braves.com/tours)**

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## MARKDOWN MONDAYS

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\* No purchase necessary. Open to legal U.S. residents 18 or older at the time of entry. Void where prohibited. Subject to official rules. Please visit the Braves Clubhouse Store at CNN Center for complete contest rules.

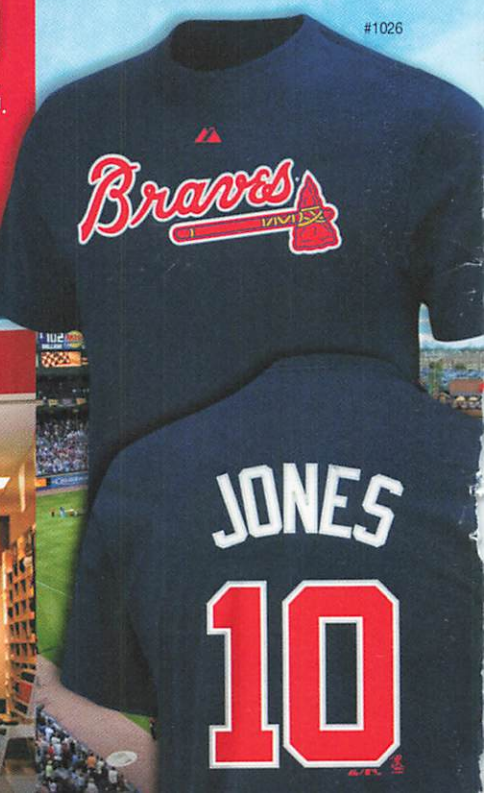


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